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FEBRUARY 2015

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10 TO BE WON
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REVIEW**
5 RUGGED
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SHOES TESTED

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unorthodox
running of the
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Subscribe or renew to go in the draw to win one of 10 CamelBak Fourteener day packs worth \$250



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Cover: Ruapehu is on our list of top 50 tramping peaks – see which other mountains make it on p32. PHOTO: Mark Watson

NEW ZEALAND: THE land of milk and honey... and mountains. Lots of them.

This month we've canvassed some of the country's best known trampers and climbers to get their pick of the 50 best mountains in New Zealand. That's no easy feat when there are literally thousands to choose from.

You'd probably expect to see the likes of Aspiring, Tasman and Aoraki in such a list. But that would be predictable. Our mountains are ones every trumper can climb.

The one condition when compiling the list is that they had to be non-technical with the only concession to safety being possible use of crampons and an ice axe. For the majority of the peaks, you need nothing more than your boots and the fitness to walk or scramble to the top.

Lists are dangerous things of course. No doubt there will be cries of outrage that Mt Suchandsuch was left off. If you feel we've been negligent, let us know – we'd love to know what you consider to be the best tramping mountains in the country.

Scanning the list, I am quite disappointed to see how few I have climbed – just 10 and some of those I've done several times. I really need to get out more.

But peaks like Avalanche, Barrier Knob and Roys Peak have always been on my tramping hit list (by the



way, everyone I have asked in Te Anau says Barrier Knob – at least as far as Gertrude Saddle – is the best day trip in Fiordland, which must make it one of the best in the country).

Anyway, it's not about how many you've done (though I'm sure many will delight in ticking off the ones they've summited on the 3D map on the centre pages). As always, it's about sharing places we've been and grabbing ideas for places we haven't.

- Alistair Hall

E-newsletter

Wilderness Weekly is now being delivered by email each Monday. To get the latest in outdoor news, gear and trips of the week head to www.wildernessmag.co.nz to sign up.



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2012 MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

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OUTDOOR AWARDS

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2015

THEY'RE BACK

- › Do you have an outdoor hero?
- › Do you have a favourite outdoor brand?
- › Has a store given you excellent service?
- › Does one store or brand beat the rest on quality or price?

NOMINATE NOW

IN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

1. **Outdoor hero of the year** Who has inspired you with great feats or tireless commitment to a cause?
2. **Independent retailer of the year** Does your local, privately owned gear shop deserve recognition?
3. **Chain retailer of the year** Which has given you consistently good service and a good product range?
4. **Web store of the year** Which gives good product range and ease of sale?
5. **Brand of the year** Can be any boot, pack, tent, clothing or outdoor equipment brand.

NOMINATE ONLINE

at wildernessmag.co.nz
by Monday, Feb 2.

REMEMBER the more convincing your nomination, the more likely your choice will make the cut

Bivouac Outdoor staff celebrate winning chain retailer of the year in 2014 – who will win in 2015?



POUAKAI CROSSING

THE ARTICLE 'ALPINE crossing number two' (November 2014), which suggested a day trip in Egmont National Park to rival the Tongariro Crossing, gave me a sense of déjà vu – or was I thinking somebody was reinventing the wheel?

I began tramping with New Plymouth Boys' High School tramping club in the early 1960s. One of the trips we did regularly was to go from Carrington Road, up the Kiri Track which followed a ridge directly to Pouakai summit, down the other side to where the much photographed tarns are, then down Mangorei Track, turning off at the junction with Plymouth Track which re-joined Kiri Track just before the road.

This tramp was an easy day's round trip for moderately fit people. It gave all the views from Pouakai and the tarns touched on in the article, and had the great advantage of finishing where you started. In those days, the school had a hut 'The Cottage' at the Carrington Road end where we spent many an enjoyable weekend. There was also Pouakai Hut and Mangorei Hut, now replaced by the new Pouakai Hut.

In my mind, recutting the Kiri and Plymouth tracks would be a much better option than continuing the Pouakai Track through to Carrington Road.

As the article stated, the through-track from North Egmont to Carrington Road would take 6-9hr, and, knowing the route, that would be for very fit people not too intent on admiring the scenery. Most others would want to stop over at either Pouakai Hut or Holly Hut. Promoting the through-track as a complement to the Tongariro Crossing would increase the demands on these huts which are already well used.

Clearly there would be more track cutting involved but reinstating the Kiri/Plymouth round day trip would be more practical and enjoyable for

those casual trampers who have enjoyed the Tongariro Crossing but do not have all the gear required for an overnight trip. There would be no need to arrange transport at one end and there would be no need, in the longer term, to expand the Pouakai or Holly huts.

- Kevin Sampson, Katikati



- Kevin receives a 60L Lowe Alpine AT Kit Bag worth \$199.95 thanks to www.outfitters.co.nz. Readers, send your letter to the editor for a chance to win.

TIPS FOR A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

WHAT A BREATH of fresh air Jo Stilwell's article 'No room for cry babies' (December 2014) was.

I fully agree – if we choose to sleep in a hut, we're all in it together, come what may. I'd add a top tip though, one that can draw precious extra rest even from the worst of hut nights: ear plugs.

A couple of dollars from any pharmacy, I keep a pair in my first aid kit so they're always with me. And not just for 'the others' either. I've been known to snore myself awake only to find half a dozen people staring at me. You'll know if I'm in your hut – I'm the bloke who sleeps with his boots by his head to protect from Nocturnal Flying Objects, with mostly limited success. Just as well I prefer to sleep outside.

- Mark Ashcroft, email

ROAM WITH PERMISSION, DON'T TRESPASS

OUT THERE COLUMNIST Mark Banham suggests 'people should be able to freely wander over private property in New Zealand' ('Forgive us our trespasses', November 2014).

I am writing to ask if you would balance things up by asking for some views of private property owners and if I can pitch my tent on Banham's front lawn in the city without his permission?

I have had a wonderful outdoor life, born and bred in small town New Zealand and now a landowner. I know my own country well.

My views about private property are very clear. I would not think of entering private property without the consent of the owner (which is usually no problem).

If it is your wish for landowners to close their borders and shut everyone out, then Banham's article has the recipe.

On the other hand, one third of New Zealand is in conservation land, plus we have miles of ocean, lakes and foreshore to roam. I have never felt unfairly restricted in my own wanderings because of private property. And most owners will allow reasonable access if you ask.

Many landowners would agree that the problems with access come from people like Banham, who do not have the courtesy to ask for permission to enter.

Our recreation does not come before someone's livelihood and life investment.

- Bruce Vickerman, email

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YOUR TRIPS, YOUR PIX



Zara Godsall walked the Abel Tasman Coast Track



Katie Guy completed the North West Circuit on Stewart Island

SEND YOUR PIX



Get your photo published here and you'll receive the Swedish 'Light My Fire' FireSteel 2.0 (\$22) with emergency whistle and 3000°C spark that works wet lighting stoves and fires or as an emergency signal. See www.ampro.co.nz for more. Full submission criteria at wildernessmag.co.nz – search Last Weekend.



What did you get up to last weekend?



The Nelson Tramping Club explored the escarpments of Thousand Acres Plateau



David Hollis stopped for a photo on Travers Pass in Nelson Lakes National Park



Felicity Boyd explored Quail Island near Christchurch



Dylan, Kiri, Akio, Charlotte, Susannah and Xavier spent the night at Turere Lodge in Rimutaka Forest Park



Russell Knowles cycled the Central Otago Rail Trail



Andrew and Dallas Hartmann walked the Routeburn Track



Bill Krippner met a kea on Bealey Spur in Arthur's Pass



Jono Bristed and Joe Allison rafted the Clarence



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DART TRACK WASHOUT 'IMPASSABLE'

Anyone planning to attempt the Rees-Dart Track this summer should think again.

River erosion has washed out 100m of the Dart Track, making it impassable at peak tramping season for the second time in two years.

The track has been undercut and washed away north of Bedford Stream, just 7km north of the road end at Chinamans Bluff, and 3km south of Sandy Bluff, where 12 months ago a huge landslip fell, blocking the track and forming a 3km-long lake.

Since the landslip, the river has been pushing heavy debris downstream, raising the riverbed and changing the course of the river. For some time, it has been eating away at banks close to the track and heavy rain on January 11 was the straw that broke the camel's back.



The latest damage to the Dart Track

Finding an alternative route will be a tough job for DOC staff, as this section is riddled with bluffs. "It looks quite gentle on a topo map but when you get in there it's as rough as guts," said Chris Hankin from DOC's Queenstown office. "Unfortunately we'll have to rebuild the track a long way back from the river."

At this early stage it's impossible for the department to say how long it will be before the track is open again.

ROUTEBURN DECISION 'TOTALLY UNREASONABLE'

A decision by DOC to allow an increase in the number of guided walkers on the Routeburn Track each day from 24 to 40 has been condemned in an ombudsman's report.

Professor Ron Paterson described the decision as 'totally unreasonable' and agreed with a letter of complaint that it 'makes a "mockery" of the process of public consultation in the development of the (Mt Aspiring management) plan and undermines public participation'.

He added that he's not even sure if the decision was legal and recommended that DOC considers making a public apology on its website.

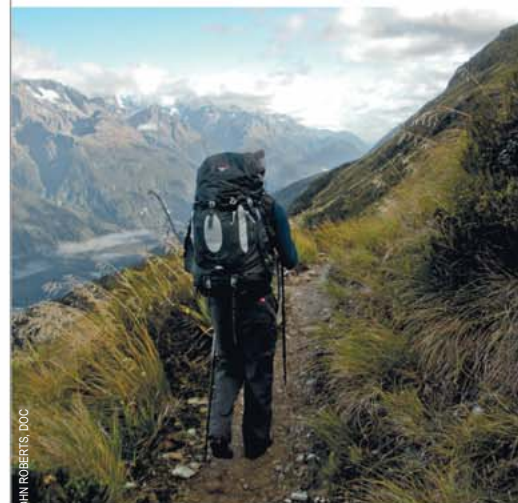
In the management plan, reviewed between 2006 and 2010, it was agreed that limiting the number to 24 helps ease the strain of numbers on the track.

In 2012, Routeburn Walks Ltd (which operates the guided walks on the track), applied to increase the number of walkers and guides permitted on the track each day. DOC approved the application despite 13 complaints.

So in June 2013 Chas Tanner, previously a member of the Otago Conservation Board, complained to the ombudsman, saying the concession was inconsistent with the plan and there were no exceptional circumstances to allow it.

DOC says it hopes to respond to the ombudsman in the new year but guided operations on the Routeburn Track will continue as normal for the time being.

"It (the report) raises some interesting questions and DOC wants to talk with the Otago Conservation Board and the New Zealand Conservation Authority in developing a response," said Doris Johnston, the deputy director general for policy.



DOC's own management plan aims to limit numbers on the Routeburn Track

KARANGAHAKE FIGHT



Locals campaign against mining in the Karangahake Gorge

the nearby Karangahake Gorge with its popular Windows Walk.

Residents say consent was given without public notification and that mining will cost the region tourism dollars and pose a risk to the local water supply.

Community group Protect Karangahake is taking the firm and Hauraki District Council to the High

Court saying consent is unlawful.

Chair of Protect Karangahake Duncan Shearer said: "We have been given no answers and little reassurance by council or the company on whether acid leachate could end up in our drinking supply or how we are going to keep walking up the mountain safely."

The Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ is supporting the community group's campaign.

Residents furious that a mining firm has been granted permission to dig at a popular tramping and swimming destination, are taking the firm and the local council to court.

New Talisman Gold Mines Ltd has been given the all clear to explore a historic underground mine beneath Karangahake, 544m, between Paeroa and Waihi. The hill is a popular tramping destination, as is



DON'T DELAY, NOMINATE TODAY



Members of the Save Fiordland executive, last year's winners of the Conservation Initiative of the Year

The clock is ticking and now's the last chance to get your nominations in for the 2015 Wilderness Outdoor Awards.

Make sure the store, brand or outdoor hero you most appreciate gets the recognition they deserve.

The five categories are:

- Independent retailer of the year
- Chain retailer of the year
- Web store of the year
- Brand of the year
- Outdoor hero of the year

Remember, all nominators go in the draw to win one of five annual subscriptions to Wilderness magazine (if you're an existing subscriber we'll add 12 issues to your current subscription). Just head to wildernessmag.co.nz by February 2 and click the link to the outdoor awards.



The overall winner wins this \$1500 Panasonic camera



FINAL SHOT

It's also your last chance to get photos in for the 2015 Photo Competition.

Send us your best photos in either of the following categories:

- Above the tree-line
- Huts and camping
- Rivers, lakes and ocean

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Email photos to: wildernessphotocomp@lifestylepublishing.co.nz. Full guidelines can be found at wildernessmag.co.nz.

The closing date is February 2, so be quick!

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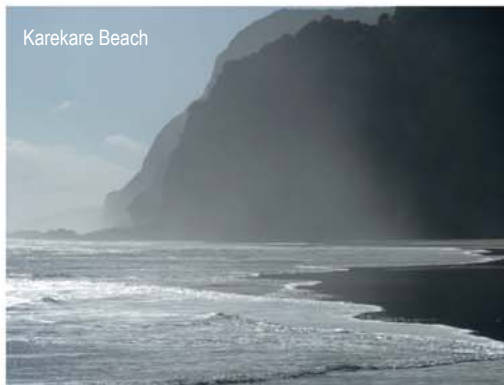


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Karekare Beach



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Head to the Waitakeres with Auckland Tramping Club. The group walks across the range, starting at Huia on the south coast and finishing at Karekare on the west coast. A shorter option is also available. Contact Roy: (09) 622 1364.

22

Get a bird's eye view of Wellington with an easy walk along the Skyline Walkway with Tararua Tramping Club. The walkway follows the ridgeline from Johnsonville to Karori. Contact Tricia: (027) 563 5109.

The Pinnacles



SONIA CREATIVE COMMONS

Join Waikato Tramping Club on a day trip to The Pinnacles in the Coromandel Peninsula. If there's time the group will view a kauri dam and finish the day with a swim in the river. Contact: (07) 856 4394.

15

5 REASONS TO GET OUTSIDE IN FEBRUARY

POST-EARTHQUAKE ROCKFALL RISK HAS PREVENTED CHIRSTCHURCH TRAMPING CLUB HEADING TO NIKAU PALM GULLY FOR FOUR YEARS. NOW IT'S SAFE AGAIN, YOU HAVE THE CHANCE TO SEE THIS BEAUTIFUL PALM FOREST. CONTACT CHRIS: (03) 358 9125.

Whangarei Tramping Club heads to the west coast for a moderate walk from Maunganui Bluff to Kai Iwi Lakes. Rewards include fine sea views, a pot luck BBQ and a dip in the water. Contact John: (027) 231 4287.

15



Maunganui Bluff

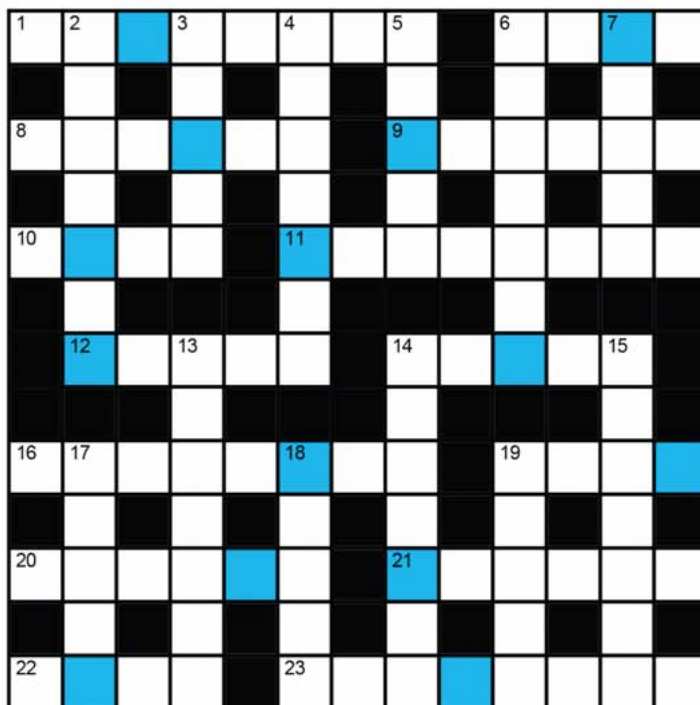
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WILDERNESS WORD

Complete the crossword and re-arrange the letters in the shaded squares to spell out the hidden solution. Send your answer, with your name and address, by February 20 to: wildernessword@lifestylepublishing.co.nz, or WildernessWord, PO Box 251566, Pakuranga, Auckland 2140. All correct entries will go in the draw to win one of five Fill2Pure Clear Radiological Advanced Filter bottles worth \$49.99.

Across

1. Degree of steepness in terrain (8)
6. Rock that forms continuous lower layer of Earth's crust (4)
8. Seabird with large colony at Cape Kidnappers in Hawkes Bay (6)
9. ____ Point located in Southland is regarded as start of West Coast region (6)
10. Way to keep warm and cook while camping (4)
11. ____ sickness - effects of oxygen deficiency that can affect mountaineers (8)
12. Small bush-clad valley (5)
14. Follows alpine guide's instructions, eg (5)
16. Protect environment from harm or destruction (8)
19. Point where bush track branches into two (4)
20. Flowing back like tide (6)
21. Jacket for hiking day trip (6)
22. Basic traditional pack for carrying possessions? (4)
23. Place of bliss and peace - like unspoilt wilderness (8)



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Down

2. ____ Meg - NZ stream and dam in Kaurau Gorge near Cromwell (7)
3. This describes thick bush vegetation (5)
4. Wide part of river where it nears sea (7)
5. Expanse of terrain (5)
6. Frighten animal in bush (7)
7. Small rounded hill (5)
13. Binding or tying outdoor gear together securely (7)
14. Free space outdoors (4,3)
15. Small natural waterways (7)
17. U-shaped curve in a stream (5)
18. Put together makeshift shelter in wilderness (3,2)
19. In ____ - this describes river that is overflowing its banks (5)

Hidden Solution: North Island elevated area! (9,5)

January's hidden solution: Beech forest

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TELL SOMEONE YOUR PLANS

IT MAY SAVE YOUR LIFE

New Zealand's outdoors is a great place to be and there are so many different ways to enjoy it. But before you set off on your adventure, take the time to plan and prepare for a safe trip.

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The latest in outdoor gear news, trends and innovation

STRETCHY, FASHIONABLE WATERPROOFS

Marine-base clothing, even that with more than a nod towards fashion, should be weatherproof enough to keep landlubbers dry, whether being worn in the backblocks or to the local café.

So, the latest Nautica jackets in their Rain-breaker series (\$329) for men and women are claimed as having a durable, breathable (nylon) exterior, polyester lining and taped seams which together provide 'strong reinforcement from wind and rain'. This jacket is also said to stretch as the body moves.

It has a hood, zippered waist pockets, hem cinch cord and adjustable cuffs.



WAR ZONE FOOTWEAR

It's easy to miss that soldiers seen dashing around Afghanistan, Syria and other current world trouble-spots are likely wearing boots not dissimilar to those trampers wear in the back-country. It's highly likely in fact that they're from the same manufacturer.

Lowa's latest Z-series boots for example, have a military development background that required tough footwear with performance close to a board lasted boot (more rigid) yet with characteristics akin to more flexible slip lasted boots. They're lightweight but capable of supporting hefty backpacks over varied terrain.

So, the Z-8S GTX (\$549, 1400g/pr) is, in Lowa's words, a hybrid, being around 75 per cent closer to the military 'high liability' footwear, whilst being able to do everything required of the less intense 'boots patrol' category. Uppers are 2mm split leather and Cordura, with a Gore-Tex lining.

Available only in Hunting and Fishing stores.

SUPPORTIVE GEAR

Mostly, supportive, compression clothing is worn by people training or competing in events – such as trail and endurance running. But, shorts and tops could just as well be worn by trampers on arduous trips to help keep muscles stable and aligned.

Claims for the latest Skins A400 range (starting at \$119 for shorts and \$149 for a short sleeve top) include increased muscle activation and stability for the lower back, glutes, groin, quads and hamstrings.

A400 clothing has more comfortable seams, new bonded hems and wider waistbands than before. They could be worth a look before your next epic.



REFRESHED OLD TIMER

The North Face's redoubtable load carrier, the Terra 65, has been completely updated with a slimmer, lighter, more user-friendly design that'll still handle 64-66l loads.

The top loading and side-access pack has a refined, multi-adjustable harness system, with padded shoulders, load spreading, mesh-lined hipbelt and mesh back panel all claimed to provide load control, ventilation and 'all-day comfort'.

There's a main side zip, improved sleeping bag compartment access and seven pockets. Fabrics are 600D/1200D polyester and 420D nylon ripstop. The pack weighs 1980g-2007g.



LIGHT AS A BREEZE

Lowe Alpine's Zephyr packs (\$379.95) feature a fully adjustable Axiom Light back system and are constructed from lightweight materials to keep their weight sub-2000g.

The packs come in two sizes for men – 55:65 and 65:75 – and ND55:65 for women. The smaller packs weigh 1850g while the 65:75 weighs 1890g.

There is side and top entry, hipbelt pockets, walking pole grippers, large stretch front and side pockets, raincover and stowable ice axe loops.



Wilderness reviewers test Jetboil's family-friendly stove and Merrell's newest hiking shoe

JETBOIL JOULE GROUP COOKING SYSTEM \$399.95

IF YOU WANT to boil water fast, you're reading the right review.

Many readers will by now be familiar with Jetboil's lightweight cooking systems aimed at mountaineers and backcountry users looking to save weight and bulk.

I adopted the Jetboil Sol system a couple of years ago as a weight saving measure, to help offset the extra load of lenses and tripod that I carry in the hills, and have never looked back.

The Jetboil system has its limitations though: output drops in the cold and at lower canister pressures, and it's basically just a water boiling device; 'cooking' as such is not really possible in the tall, narrow pots, nor do they lend themselves to being useful for more than one or two people (I use a Sumo pot when with a companion). This is where the Joule Group Cooking System comes in. Despite the slightly grandiose name, it's a stove and a pot in practical terms, and it's the fastest thing I have used to boil water.

Aimed at parties with 3-5 people, the Joule comprises a burner unit with inverted gas cylinder, Piezo ignition and a regulator that pre-heats the fuel passing through to the burner head. This is a feature that sets it apart from regular Jetboil (and many other) butane/

propane mix stoves. Because the inverted canister delivers liquid fuel, rather than vapour, and is preheated, it maintains pressure and output in cold conditions and as canister pressure drops. The 2.5 litre pot has an integrated heat exchanger, neoprene insulation sleeve and integrated handle.

I boiled 500ml of water in a vaguely scientific test (at sea level, with a three-quarter full canister and bringing water to a rolling boil) and compared it with boil times for some other stoves I own. The results speak for themselves: Jetboil Joule, 1m18s; Jetboil Sol, 1m58s; Regular lightweight burner/pot with heat exchanger base, 1m48s; MSR Whisperlite International with heat exchanger base, 2m1s.

The Joule system packs conveniently into its own pot and seems relatively robust for a lightweight, high output cooking system (813g without fuel).

Deservedly, the Joule has won a number of international awards and I think it's definitely worth considering for weight conscious family groups, expeditions and small teams of climbers or trampers.

- Mark Watson



WORTH CONSIDERING
FOR WEIGHT CONSCIOUS
FAMILY GROUPS

MERRELL CAPRA SPORT GTX \$220

THE CAPRA SPORT is Merrell's latest hiking shoe and is tough and trail-ready.

I tried them out over tracks and steep open country on some day hikes around Canterbury. I particularly liked the chunky Vibram sole that is well cleated and provides excellent grip on steep, slippery tracks. The built-in stiffeners, running along the outside of the shoe, and neatly linked to the lace-up points, are great for tightening up the shoe and providing extra stability over rough travel. The shoes weigh 794g and have a good sturdy toe cap and a generally rigid feel. This last point did create some discomfort around and under the ankle, as the shoe is quite stiff here with both the stability, built into the heel area, and the built-in stiffening strips. Some allowance will be needed to break them in.

On a hike up Mt Thomas in the Canterbury foothills one evening I gave the shoes a good workout. The track is pretty steep in many places, approaching 45 degrees, and quite slippery with loose gravel and pine needles present. I had a reasonable day load as well but felt safe and secure particularly when heading down the steep sections, with my toes pointing down the slope, without encountering any traction issues. That chunky tread and stable platform works a treat to keep you on the trail, but remember that stiffness can make them a bit tiring to wear as a day shoe around home and office.

They are also Gore-Tex lined to improve comfort and ventilation, which is a bonus for hot, steep tracks.

- Pat Barrett



A CHUNKY TREAD
AND STABLE
PLATFORM

HIKING SHOES

Hiking shoes offer many of the same features found in tramping boots – but they're lighter and more agile.

SALEWA FIRETAIL EVO GTX \$279

I TESTED THE Salewa Firetail Evo on an overnight tramp on Mt Taranaki over rocky surfaces and uneven trail and on both moderate and well-formed trails in the Coromandel.

I usually prefer the ankle support of a boot and the higher cut that doesn't let water and debris in so easily, among other things. So it's an accolade to the Firetail Evo that I thought it a worthy replacement for my boots, albeit in certain conditions.

The shoe performed well on easier, well-benched and groomed trails. If you're the kind of person who finds tramping boots cumbersome, and you prefer to stick mostly to the trail, you'll love them.

The Vibram sole is super sticky and much grippier on slippery surfaces than

I expected at first glance, and the firm full length rand gives it a robust feel and protects the uppers from scrapes.

The Firetail Evo is designated as a hiking and approach shoe and is fitted with climbing know-how and technology. First is the 3F system, a wire that wraps from the arch to the laces and around the heel. The idea is to give support to the ankle while still allowing freedom of movement.

There's also odour control, climbing lacing and a 'multi-fit footbed', which means you can customise the fit by adding or removing a layer of the innersole.

The shoe is also guaranteed to be 100 per cent blister-free, and I can certainly attest to that. It was comfortable without any hot spots and easy to wear right out of the box.

Weighing 750g (m: 830g) many lightweight or on-track trampers will want to opt for these for comfort's sake.

- Hazel Phillips

BLISTER-FREE
COMFORT



MEET the REVIEWERS



Alistair Hall is Wilderness magazine's editor



Paul King has worked in outdoor retail and is Wilderness magazine's gear advisor



Beth Masser is a Wilderness reader from Te Anau who describes herself as an "undercover adrenaline junky". She's currently involved in conservation management with DOC



Hazel Phillips is a Wilderness columnist who spends her weekends in the outdoors

AHNU SUGARPINE WATERPROOF \$249.95

THE SUGARPINE WATERPROOF is a women's-specific shoe weighing 606g. It's touted as an allrounder and I found it suited to urban walks as well as adventures further afield. I tested them on day trips scrambling up and down the slippery slopes of Wellington's town belts. I also gave them a full tour of the Routeburn and Milford Great Walks over the Christmas holidays.

There is no need to avoid puddles; the waterproof fabric kept my feet dry all day.

The low cut shoes are well constructed and have a fully enclosed tongue to assist with waterproofing and keep debris out. Apart from being low cut, the shoes feel more like a boot than a trainer in terms of their strong foot housing and construction.

The sturdy Vibram sole offered excellent

support and traction on wet and dry surfaces. However, under the weight of a 15kg tramping pack on the Great Walks the sole did wear quickly and compressed to the point of separating. The sole is glued to a waterproof mesh, suede and leather upper with double stitching throughout.

I found these shoes light and the sizing small compared with other brands of footwear I have tried and they needed a bit more breaking in than a soft trainer.

The version I tested were black, raspberry and powder blue and are stylish enough for me to wear around town.

At this price, the shoe provides reasonable value, particularly given its versatility.

- Beth Masser.

A LIGHTWEIGHT
FEMALE-SPECIFIC SHOE





MERRELL CHAMELEON FLUX \$249

FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST, and that's certainly true of Merrell's Chameleon II Flux (850g). From first fitting to the end of a long walk, the comfort and overall performance remain unchanged.

They accommodate most foot volumes and open wide and easy for unfussy entry, then cinch up securely for excellent forefoot hold, reducing forward movement and heel lift inside the shoe.

The nicely rigid and stable midsole make them excellent for on-the-toes climbing and on rocks, yet the moulded nylon shank isn't so stiff that ground-feel is lost on uneven or varied terrain.

The Vibram outsole is designed to grip in most conditions and on most angles, with well-placed lugs on the toe, instep and heel for excellent traction and confidence over roots and rocks, or when things become edgy on a steep slope.

In mud, the Chameleon finds its Achilles heel. The deep and bevelled lugs clog readily, making slippery slopes even more so. However, once back on rocks or a formed trail they begin shedding again.

Due to their 10mm heel-to-toe drop, the Chameleon's footfall is flattish and can clomp slightly on formed trails.

Although this can reduce strain on injury-prone calves, it did, at times, force me to walk off my heels. That said, the heel is nicely cupped, and although its cushioning initially felt hard, it softened to unnoticeable during the day.

The shoe does offer a decent arch, and with Merrell's much-improved EVA insole, the foot is comfortably supported.

The synthetic uppers overlay breathable mesh panels, and are strong with excellent protection around heel and toe, and include a lightweight protective pattern applied around the toebox. The bellows tongue keeps out trail debris.

As an all-rounder, the Chameleon would be my shoe of choice for all light hiking where water resistance isn't a priority.

- Paul King

ROBUST SHOE
OFFERING EXCELLENT
PROTECTION



VASQUE GRAND TRAVERSE \$199.99

THESE SHOES ARE the cheapest in our review and weighing 730g (w: 610g) are pipped to the lightweight mantle by the women's-specific Ahnu Sugarpine.

Designed for trail and as an approach shoe, they have a soft 1.8mm suede leather with polyurethane mesh panels and a protective toe rand. They're waterproof to the point they resist a soaking from mildewed grasses and shallow puddles, but because they are extremely low cut – coming in well below my ankle – and the tongue and lacing system runs right down to the toes, anything more than 6cm deep will have water seeping in. However, I'll take the comfort and precision that comes from the full-length lacing system over a few more millimetres of waterproofness.

The Vibram outsole is made from several rubber compounds, one of which is 'Megagrip'. It sounds OTT, but I enjoyed excellent traction on uphills and never felt like slipping on my downhill. I did a few morning hikes down steep, wet grassy slopes carrying my daughter in a child carrier. Braking and staying in control of the descent was crucial – and easy. On trail, the lugs never seemed to clog and I found it a joy to rock hop down streams.

There's more torsional twist in this shoe than I would like,

though fortunately there's a good heel cupping system: a fabric lace wraps around the heel and is tightened with the laces, securing your foot.

I found the shoe's last too narrow for my broad feet. I had to lace the shoe up very loosely on my first few outings, but after having worn them every day now for two months – mostly for short periods but also for several full days – they have stretched and moulded comfortably to my foot.

Broad feet in narrow shoes can lead to wear and tear, but the Grand Traverse is holding up well with no noticeable strain showing, suggesting they are well constructed.

These shoes offer good value for money especially for those whose feet aren't too broad.

- Alistair Hall

LIGHTWEIGHT
VALUE FOR
MONEY OPTION



WHAT IS WILDERNESS RECOMMENDED?

To be Wilderness recommended, an item must meet a variety of standards including some combination of the following: value for money, innovation, construction, comfort, durability, aesthetics, performance and whether it is truly suitable for its intended use here in New Zealand. Those items that don't receive the badge are not bad – in most cases they will still be well worthy of your consideration – they just don't quite get a perfect score.

AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Naresh Kumar overcame excruciating pain, persistent possums and being swept away by a torrent to become the first to complete the Te Araroa Trail in sandals. **Matthew Pike** speaks to the Chennai-born runner



Sandals old and new. The old pair (left) lasted 1800km before the sole gave way

For most who complete the Te Araroa Trail, the journey starts and ends at either Bluff or Cape Reinga. But for Naresh Kumar, the journey started in Chennai in 2001 and finished at the Reading Cinema in Invercargill.

The 32-year-old has dreamed of living in New Zealand ever since he saw the first *Lord of the Rings* movie.

"I saw the movie and thought, what is this place?" recalls Kumar. "I was like a teenage girl at a Justin Bieber concert."

Last year, his dream came true when he

was granted NZ residency. But before settling down to a full-time job in IT, Kumar wanted to run and walk the full length of the country, determined to finish in time for the opening of the final *Hobbit* movie.

This gave him just 90 days to complete the trail; a challenge he accomplished with three days to spare.

Despite his quick time (it usually takes 4-6 months to complete it), there were terrifying moments on the trail. The first was a river crossing over a swollen Waipapa River in Puketi Forest, Northland. The river

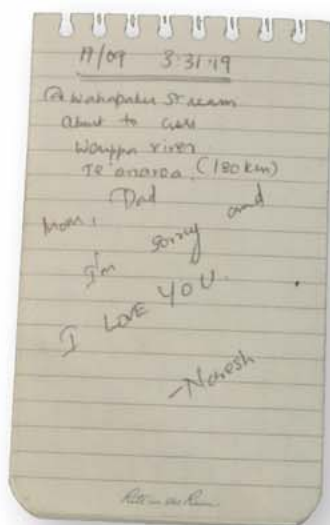
swept him off his feet and took him 3km downstream.

"I had to stop treading so as not to get my feet caught in debris," he says. "At the same time I needed to get to the other side."

"I eventually felt shingle under the water and I could grab hold of the bank at the other side."

Kumar felt uneasy about the crossing beforehand and even wrote a 'death note' to his parents in case he didn't make it across.

After escaping the river, Kumar set up



The 'death note' Kumar wrote for his parents before the fateful Waipapa River crossing

camp in the forest, only to be awoken in the early hours by an army of possums. "It was like someone had decorated my tent with Christmas lights. Their eyes glowed as they looked at my tent.

"One of them was trying to get in, broke my tent pole and the tarp landed on me. I thought 'all I've been through today and now I have to fight these possums in the rain!'"

The lowest point of all was descending to Camp Stream Hut from Two Thumb Range, Canterbury, in colossal winds. "Every time I stood up, the wind pushed me over." At one point the wind pushed so hard, Kumar landed in a stream, badly spraining his foot. "I couldn't bear the pain," he says. "I couldn't eat when I got to the hut. I just popped ibuprofen and went to sleep."

For Kumar, the real challenge had now begun. Instead of waiting two weeks for his foot to heal, he decided to carry on through the pain to reach his target. "You learn more about yourself when the challenge becomes real," he says. "No-one's behind you with a gun forcing you to walk. You can always throw in the towel, but you need to ask how much you want it. That will define how much you push."

If bloody mindedness was part of the reason Kumar succeeded, then spirit-lifting generosity from strangers was another. He has countless tales of kindness from people he met along the way.

Kumar arrived in Pataua, on Northland's east coast, having already run 58km that day. It was dusk and the wind was howling. Dreading the thought of putting up his tent, he decided instead to sleep on the floor of a public toilet. As he was contemplating this, a local man came over and, within minutes, Kumar was sitting in his Jacuzzi, drinking beer and watching the sunset. "He then took me to his friends' house and they kept pouring red wine and feeding me fine cheese. Then the guy made



Naresh Kumar enjoying life after completing the Te Araroa Trail

me the best beef stir fry I've ever had."

Similar random acts of generosity were frequent on Kumar's trip. He made many friends and wasn't short of offers for Christmas dinner. He's also become something of a celebrity since completing the challenge. Being 1.93m with a long beard, longer hair and yes, those sandals, he's instantly recognisable. In fact, our interview was frequently stopped by people wanting to shake his hand and wish him well.


The sandals are what captured media attention. Made by Bedrock in California, the first pair lasted 1800km and the second pair are still in good shape, having seen him through the final 1200km.

"I often get blisters when running in shoes," he explains. "So I always wear san-

dals for runs now." Kumar didn't even let a blizzard at the top of Waiau Pass, in Nelson Lakes, change his mind, though he does wear socks when traipsing through snow.

"I also wore bread bags at Waiau Pass so my feet didn't get wet."

Having seen a cross-section of Aotearoa, his favourite place is the Tararua Range. "I was on the ridgeline and on one side it was a beautiful sunny day, while on the other side the mountain was blocking massive clouds like a dam, and you could see them spilling over the top. It was a freezing day, the tussock was frozen with icicles and, as the sun rose, the icicles melted and shattered like glass over the ground. It was like listening to an orchestra."

Kumar has been raising money for TEAR Fund, fighting human trafficking. 



Royal Hut, providing shelter from the elements for many decades



HIGH COUNTRY LIFE


Royal Hut, Te Kahui Kaupeka Conservation Park / **MODERATE**

Named after a supposed visit by Prince Charles and Princess Anne in their youth, Royal Hut is an old shepherd's hut; basic, but well preserved and maintained and, most importantly, with loads of old school charm – a throwback to the days of traditional high country farming.

The hut is reached from Mt Gerald Station, following a series of orange markers parallel to Mt Gerald Stream. At Rex Simpson Hut, strike up the unnamed long spur, known as Snake Ridge. This is a long continuous spur that runs all the way up to Beuzenberg Peak and Stag Saddle.

On a clear day, the views from the ridge offer stunning views of Lake Tekapo and the Southern Alps.

Take Bush Stream Track from the saddle, down tussock-covered slopes.

Royal Hut sits on the true right bank of Bush Stream, a welcome refuge at the end of a long day of walking. 

- Jingyi Tan



WILD FILE

Access From Mt Gerald Station, along Lilybank Road

Grade Moderate

Time 2 days

Map BX17, BY17





A CHERISHED VIEW

Travers Range, Nelson Lakes National Park / **MODERATE**

An evening wander from a campsite high on the St Arnaud Range in Nelson Lakes National Park revealed this stunning landscape view, backlit by the sun setting in the southwest. I was captivated by the intense beauty of the moment as the sun's rays penetrated the valleys and passes and presented the high peaks of Nelson Lakes in a magnificent scene dominated by rock, snow, bluffs and basins.


All of the main summits of the range are visible from here, adding to both the spectacle and the grandeur of my ridge top vantage. Mt Angelus, 2075m, and its sprawling ridge are central, while immediately behind is the steep summit cone of Mt Hopeless, 2278m. Beyond that again, and further to the left, is the massive truncated bulk of Mt Cupola while finally out to the far left (south-

east) is Mt Travers itself, her northern aspects resplendent under late spring snows.

Both Angelus and Travers are readily climbed by fit trampers, but Hopeless and Cupola are true climber's mountains.

I was surprised by the depth of this incredible view, heightened by the sun's angle, and spent many minutes savouring my find and attempting to capture the changing light and the best vantage.

Beneath my feet lay the deep, dark bowl of Lake Rotoiti and distant St Arnaud Village, but my attention was fully on the unfolding view as a warm and gentle breeze sighed over the crags and memories of similar, often unheralded moments in the hills filled my mind.

Such moments are forever cherished. 

- Pat Barrett



WILD FILE

Access From Lake Rotoiti via the Parachute Rocks Track to the crest of the St Arnaud Range

Grade Moderate-difficult

Time 4-5hr

Map BS25



See More...PIPITS

Three places to see the tiny, sub-alpine pipit



SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Most trampers have seen them; a small dun-coloured bird that alights briefly, dips its tail, then runs off. They seem to fly only reluctantly, despite being perfectly capable of winging it for some distance. Their distinctive tail dipping is sometimes more of a whole body action, performed when poised – often on a rock or somewhere slightly prominent.

Pipits live in the sub-alpine habitat of New Zealand's mountaintops, but like the kea, aren't a true alpine bird and spend winters below the bushline. They are also found in a wide variety of other open habitats, including the coast; anywhere they can forage for insects and seeds.

Pipits (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*) are part of a worldwide *motacillidae* family, which also includes wagtails and longclaws. Two New Zealand sub-species are recognised; one on the Chatham Islands and the other in the subantarctic Auckland and Campbell Islands. The latter are slightly more yellow than the mainland variety.

Pipits are easily confused with Eurasian skylarks, a bird deliberately introduced to New

Zealand during the 1860s and 1870s. Unlike the skylark, the endemic pipit rarely flies high above the ground. Skylarks prefer cultivated environments and are now one of the most common birds in New Zealand. They have also reached the subantarctic islands.

Sadly, the pipit seems to be in decline and is rated 'at risk'. Trampers, however, can still see them in many locations. Ornithologists have described their call variously as 'a sparrow-like chirrup', a 'drawn out tswee' and a 'brief unpretentious trill'. ^W

- Shaun Barnett

1 - TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK

Any of the major tracks in Tongariro National Park make good places to spot pipits; either the Ketetahi approach of the Alpine Crossing, the Mangatepopo Valley, or the tops between Mangaturuturu and Whakapapa huts.

2 - LEWIS PASS TOPS

These accessible tops above Lewis Pass make a great summer destination; tarn-strewn and with great views, they are worth the small

effort to climb above the bushline, even if no pipits are in sight.

3 - AUCKLAND ISLANDS

Most trips to the Auckland Islands Nature Reserve visit Enderby Island, which is a bird-lover's paradise. Pipits are often seen flitting around the grassy, boulder fringes of the coastline. Only DOC-permitted boats are allowed to visit the island.



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 **SOTO**
Sparked by nature

MAGGIE BARRY ANSWERS *your* QUESTIONS



We've had an impassioned response to our call for questions to the new conservation minister.

Readers asked about topics that directly affect trampers and our natural environment. We put the best of these straight to the minister.

Many people don't bother paying hut fees. What can be done to stop this that doesn't include raising fees on tickets and hut passes for those honest trampers who do pay?

- Mike McGavin

The department's approach relies on users understanding that their contribution is essential to maintaining these facilities, and understanding the consequences of the system. As context, the public recreation network generates \$13 million in revenue each year, but it costs more than 10 times that to support it.

I am committed to investing significant taxpayer resources in the maintenance, servicing and eventual replacement of the public recreation network and am equally committed to users contributing to these costs. Without those fees, maintenance and the visitor experience would suffer.

There are opportunities to do better. For example, DOC is investigating opportunities to enable people to purchase hut tickets and passes online. This should make it much easier to pay for last minute trips, taking advantage of good weather. We need to be better at letting people know what their fees are used for and what will happen if they don't pay. This could be something for DOC and outdoor clubs to focus on over the coming year.

We also need your support when you are in the outdoors. If you see others not paying, please encourage them to do the right thing.

How can the Government justify allowing commercial exploration of Victoria Forest Park?

- Jonathan Dodd

There are strict regulations for operators who wish to operate on conservation land. They must meet criteria set out by DOC in regards to mitigating environmental impact

Minister of Conservation Maggie Barry has the protection of native species high on her to-do list

and to access arrangements, and must also satisfy local council requirements under the RMA. If they can't, then they will not be able to operate there.

On the West Coast, there has been mineral exploration and mining occurring on conservation land for over 100 years.

There are 52 active permits in or overlapping Victoria Forest Park, the first of which was granted in 1987. One of New Zealand's biggest gold mines is in the forest park (OceanaGold's Reefion Mine) and it has been one of the single largest employers on the West Coast.

There are obvious and significant economic benefits to exploration and mining, both nationally and for local regions. This Government remains committed to developing our oil, gas and mineral resources in a sensible, safe and environmentally responsible way.

What research and trials are currently underway to replace I080? How much money is invested in finding an alternative?

- Gareth Nightly

DOC commits between \$1-2 million each year to pest animal research. This includes work on improved trapping techniques, new toxins, and lures for the control of possums, stoats and rats. In addition, various research is being undertaken to improve our understanding of predator responses to toxins, and their interactions with devices to improve the effectiveness of all ground-based tools. DOC also supports Predator Free New Zealand.

Research initiatives underway include the development of resetting toxin-delivery devices, called Spitfires, that will deliver more than 100 doses of toxin to stoats, rats, possums and feral cats. The configuration and toxin will vary depending on the target species. There is also ongoing testing and refining of self-resetting traps and improved lures for possums, rats and stoats.

New toxins targeting possums, feral pigs, stoats and feral cats are now available for use as a result of research and development by DOC and others.

In some areas, like Nelson Lakes National Park, wasps are present in plague proportions. What is DOC's plan to eradicate them?

- David Lloyd

DOC is aware that common wasps are among the worst of the invasive animals in

New Zealand's forests. They threaten our native birds and insects, damage our tourism industry and pose a significant threat to human health.

DOC is monitoring wasp densities in key biodiversity and recreational areas, but currently there are few tools to control them apart from destroying individual nests when they are a problem.

At Nelson Lakes DOC has been trialling and refining a bait station method to control wasps and is investigating ways to scale up this method to larger areas of conservation land in the next three years.

What are your intentions with backcountry hut passes in regards to being able to use them in all serviced huts?

- Frank Guthrie

Of the 979 huts available to the public on conservation land, 909 are either free or can be paid for using the Backcountry Hut Pass.

Most of the 70 huts where the backcountry pass are not valid are either Great Walk or Serviced alpine huts. The Backcountry Hut Pass has never been available for these as their maintenance costs are significantly higher than for the rest of the hut network.

The majority of serviced huts remain part of the Backcountry Hut Pass system but a few have recently moved from the traditional 'first come, first to get a bunk' approach to 'book in advance'.

I am happy to say that the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand is currently working with DOC to explore issues related to the hut pass and the online booking system.

The goal is to improve the system so that more people buy and use the pass, and get out in the backcountry.

Can you think of any reason why the Community Conservation Partnership Fund wouldn't be continued and expanded beyond its current time-frame and budget?

- Sam Newton, NZ Alpine Club

The success of the CCPF will be monitored over the four years and any decision on its future to be made at a later date.

We sadly lack huts in the upper North Island – are there plans to replace damaged huts or build new backcountry huts from Waikato north?

- Kristy Mcpherson

I am very aware that half the population of New Zealand lives in the upper North Island, and needs good recreational opportunities.

It is DOC's intention to sustain and maintain its existing network of backcountry huts north of Waikato. There are no current plans to build additional backcountry huts, but, where there is demonstrated growth in demand, with a clear and demonstrable return on the investment, the department may consider adding to the existing infrastructure in future. The recent replacement of the Pahautea Hut on Mt Pirongia is an example of this.


I was heartened to hear about the tramping clubs investigating the Kaimai Ranges to improve the tramping there. Where communities and partnerships have the desire to establish a greater backcountry hut network than present, DOC will support this.

I'd like to say thanks for vetoing the monorail and the tunnel. But, more importantly, can you please not even consider a road from Hollyford to Jacksons Bay?

- Terry Davis

Thank you for your support for the monorail and tunnel decisions. The Conservation Act requires that, as Minister, I shall consider every complete application for a concession that I receive.

A final question from Wilderness magazine: There are some big-money projects, such as the new Anchorage Hut and sealing the Tasman Valley Road, which benefit overseas visitors as much, if not more than, locals. Do you think these should be at least part-funded by tourism?

Tourism is a \$24 billion industry for New Zealand. International visitors earn over \$10 billion – 15.3 per cent – of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings. We want New Zealand to remain a world leader in tourism, so it is important that central and local government don't shy away from investing in vital infrastructure to meet the expectations of both New Zealanders and international visitors. In some cases, joint-funded initiatives make good sense and those will be actively pursued, but the Government is keen to avoid using international visitors as cash cows when their contribution is already significant and growing. 

I ATE TUTU... AND LIVED TO TELL THE STORY

Unlike our Antipodean neighbour, New Zealand has very little in the way of harmful flora and fauna. Yet **Matthew Pike** recalls brainlessly encountering the most harmful of all... and how it almost killed him

Can you tell me what the date is?" asked the paramedic, as he helped me up from the bed. I couldn't. I was fairly sure it was winter, but did that mean it was January or August? What hemisphere was I in?

"Can you tell me your name?" tried the paramedic again, as he sat me down in the ambulance. "Matt," I replied. "That's good," he said. "You couldn't tell us that a few minutes ago." I was aware enough by this stage to realise my memory loss was unusual, but this paled in comparison to the swathes of pain striking through my left arm. It was as close to unbearable as any pain I'd experi-

enced. I couldn't handle it. I couldn't keep still. There was no way of sitting where it didn't hurt.

"We need you to keep still Matt," said the paramedic, sternly. 'F*** you!' I thought. 'If you were in this much pain, you wouldn't sit still either.' "Where does it hurt?" he asked.

"My right side... no, my left side." Lauren, my partner, then noticed there was something strange about my left shoulder. It looked as if it had melted.

"His arm has come out of its socket," said one of the paramedics, before giving me my first dose of morphine.

This is known as a 'post seizure anterior



Do not try this at home – a mature tutu plant is recognisable by its red berries



dislocation' and is not uncommon given my recent episode. Thank goodness for morphine and 'happy gas'. Combined, they made the process of popping my arm back into place both enjoyable and hilarious.

I wasn't entirely surprised to learn that I'd suffered a violent seizure. The symptoms had been building throughout the night and I'd feared it might happen while always hoping there was nothing seriously wrong.

It must have been the plant I'd eaten. But how could it be? It was only supplejack.

I'd recently been told that new shoots of supplejack taste delicious and are often known as 'New Zealand asparagus' because they look rather like large shoots of asparagus before they reach their adult vine form.

On a trip to Mokoroa Falls, in Auckland's Waitakere Ranges, I spied what looked like giant asparagus shoots. 'Aha – this must be it,' I thought, snapping one of the shoots near the base. I carried it home and looked for pictures of new supplejack shoots on the internet for comparison. Photos were few and far between, but there were a couple, and both I and a housemate agreed that they were of the same plant I'd carried home.

I took a bite out of the plant. It was revolting. The flavour was both sharp and bitter. I spat it out and rinsed my mouth with water.

To most sane people, that would have been the warning sign. But rather than assume I had the wrong plant, I somewhat foolishly decided it might taste better cooked.

I cut the plant into pieces and boiled it with carrots and broccoli to go with my dinner.

But cooking the plant hadn't helped at all. It was still revolting and I spat it out and threw the pieces of plant away. I did, however, eat the carrots and broccoli with which I'd cooked the plant.

It wasn't until several weeks later that I received confirmation of my mistake in an email from Auckland Museum showing a newly sprouting plant that looked rather like large asparagus. It looked similar to the images of supplejack that I had seen earlier, but not identical. Unfortunately, it *did* look identical to the plant that I'd eaten. The photo was of a newly sprouting tutu plant. I hadn't heard of tutu before, but was soon to realise I'd bitten off far more than I could chew.

"I regard tutu as the most toxic plant in New Zealand," says herbarian manager for Landcare Research, Ines Schöenberger. She told me that in Henry Connor's book *Plants that poison – a New Zealand Guide*, Connor describes tutu as 'the classic poison plant'.

"The species you encountered was most probably *coriaria arborea* because this is the most common species of tutu and it's easy to see how a young shoot could be mistaken for supplejack," Schöenberger says.



Thanks to jibes by friends and family, Matt will never live down his tutu experience

Thank goodness for morphine and 'happy gas'.
THEY MADE THE PROCESS OF POPPING MY ARM BACK INTO PLACE BOTH ENJOYABLE AND HILARIOUS

I'm told I'm not alone in having made this mistake but, depressingly, almost every other instance involved either a cow or a sheep.

The plant immediately became a nightmare for early farmers once they began grazing livestock here. In fact, Captain Cook himself lost some of his beasts to the dreaded plant. Cattle are particularly susceptible to having a nibble and there have been cases when farm-

ers reported losing up to 75 per cent of their herd from eating tutu.

Amazingly, there have been two reports of circus elephants keeling over and dropping dead after engaging in a fatal snack.

Two more elephants in the 1960s had their tutu meals rudely interrupted by their owner when he discovered what they were munching. Both had seizures but were

injected with barbiturates and survived.

Tutu is a shrub found across New Zealand on the margins of coastal and mountain forests and in grassland and shrubland. It can grow up to six-metres high.

In *Plants that poison*, Connor describes rather soberingly the effects of tutin – the toxin in the tutu plant: ‘Tutin acts on the central nervous system leading to excitement, epileptiform convulsions, exhaustion, and a comatose state; death may occur during the convulsions. Breathing is usually affected, and defecation and micturition (passing urine) are more frequent. Mucous membranes and lungs may be congested.

‘Tutu poisonings may give rise to the additional symptoms of vomiting, incapacity for work, and loss of memory.’

I was clearly very fortunate. DOC plant scientist Peter De Lange wrote of my case on a web forum: ‘He is very lucky. He should write up his story, take a basic botany course and also buy a Lotto ticket.’

“Young shoots of tutu are most poisonous of all,” explains Schöenberger. “They contain more tutin than older shoots and they do look like new supplejack shoots so it’s something people should be aware of.”

Two hours after eating my dinner that fateful evening, I was feeling drowsy and a little bit sick. Lauren was working a late shift and I normally stay awake until she gets back. But this evening, all I wanted to do was sleep. Only I couldn’t. Each time I was about to doze off, my body jolted. The jolts were numerous and felt like an electric shock.

After two more hours I managed to fall asleep but awoke abruptly feeling as though I’d been screaming. There was a strange residue on my pillow, similar to vomit but in a smaller quantity.

I knew something was wrong. I knew I’d been poisoned. But I didn’t quite know what was happening or whether it was serious. When Lauren arrived home, I explained what I’d done and what was happening.

She stayed awake and watched as I tried to sleep but I continued to jolt as I drifted. The jolts gradually died away.

We both awoke shortly before 5am, probably because of another jolt, and we agreed I needed to see the doctor later that morning. At that moment, I experienced two enormous jolts before blacking out.

The next hour was infinitely more distressing for Lauren and my housemates than for me. I was unconscious and therefore unaware of the panic.

My violent seizure started as a series of jerks and finished with every muscle in my body being stretched to the point of snapping. My shoulder was ripped from its socket. Poor Lauren witnessed my eyes roll back, my lips turn blue and my mouth froth, seriously hampering my breathing. Within moments,



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LAUREN BAKER

A severe seizure, a dislocated shoulder and a night in hospital - Matt nearly paid the ultimate price for eating tutu



STEVIE ATTWOOD

A tutu shoot - not too dissimilar in appearance to a supplejack shoot or freshly sprouted asparagus

three bleary-eyed housemates had joined the commotion.

For a while, Lauren thought I was dead. Then for a while longer, she feared my brain may be permanently damaged, as although I regained consciousness, I couldn't tell anyone who or where I was. That's when the ambulance arrived.

Tutu has historically been a menace. Maori used to treat poisonings by holding the patient upside down over a fire and feeding them repulsive fluid so they vomited the poison.

Tutu berries are the only part of the plant that isn't poisonous, but the seeds inside are. Early settlers would make tutu beer and pie from the berries, but a lot of care was needed to separate berry juice from the seeds - a task not always successfully carried out, as some parties discovered to their detriment.

More recently, tutin has been a menace to beekeepers who now constantly check samples of their honey to ensure it doesn't contain the toxin. When normal honeydew sources are depleted, bees may take honeydew secreted onto tutu leaves by an insect called the passion-vine hopper, which has sucked toxic sap from the plant.

The most recent outbreak of tutin-infected honey took place in the Coromandel in 2008 when 22 people fell ill, including school principal Vaughan van Rensburg. He, and his mother- and father-in-law, suffered the effects of tutin poisoning to differing degrees.

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"My father-in-law was a wee bit sick - a little under the weather," says van Rensburg, who now runs Chapel Downs Primary School in Auckland. "But my mother-in-law got really sick. She had memory loss and was burbling rubbish. We were worried she was losing her marbles."

Before visiting her in Thames hospital with the family, van Rensburg put a big dollop of the offending honey on his toast, not realising this was the culprit. He drove the family to see her and, after a while, left to supervise his three-year-old son in the playground, where he collapsed.

"From what I can remember I felt fine until I collapsed," he recalls. "Somehow, people got me to hospital and I managed to mumble who I was." Van Rensburg was now lying in a hospital bed downstairs from his mother-in-law. In hospital, he had another violent seizure, falling out of bed, and was

rushed to Hamilton hospital.

"It was terrible for my wife travelling between Thames and Hamilton not knowing what's happened to her mother or me," explains van Rensburg. "We both had different reactions; there was no link at this stage and my wife thought her world was falling apart."

"It was only after we both returned home that a nurse in Thames hospital heard about the case and put it all together. It was such a relief to get that link."

Van Rensburg continued to feel sluggish for a couple of weeks, but luckily there have been no long term effects on him or his in-laws. "The thing that worried me was what would happen if a kid had had the same amount of honey as me. That was the scary thing."

Van Rensburg's case was one of misfortune - mine was one of stupidity. But it does highlight that, even in an environment with flora and fauna as safe as New Zealand's, there is a plant that can be deadly if consumed even in small doses.

My incident has led to plenty of jibes from friends and family ironically likening me to Bear Grylls and designing a T-shirt for me that says 'I ate tutu... and survived'. For all the mistakes I've made in life (and there have been a few) I've never made one with such potentially disastrous consequences, so I'll happily put up with the jibes and a weakened left arm compared to what might have been. **W**

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MARK WATSON

Gertrude Valley from
Barrier Knob



NEW ZEALAND'S 50 **BEST** TRAMPING PEAKS

We've picked the brains of those who really know the country's mountains to create this conclusive list of the must-climb peaks for any Kiwi trumper. All 50 are climbable without rope, all 50 provide a darn good challenge and all 50 are magnificent. Start ticking them off now.

BY ALISTAIR HALL, MATTHEW PIKE, SHAUN BARNETT, PAT BARRETT, NICK GROVES, RAY SALISBURY, GEOFF SPEARPOINT AND MARK WATSON

BARRIER KNOB, 1879m

(See photo previous page)

Fiordland National Park, Southland



New Zealand has many classic tramping summits achievable in a day from the road, but Barrier Knob tops my list as the most classic. Reaching its summit of jumbled diorite blocks is a singular ascent through montane Fiordland and it's do-able by any trampler with ice axe and crampon competency and basic route finding ability.

I've been to its summit many times, but probably the most memorable was my first visit in 1997. I'd arrived at Homer Hut that morning. It was the first of what would become many trips to the Darran Mountains over the years and I had a whole month ahead of me to climb and explore.

I asked the nearest person what was the best familiarisation trip I could do on my own.

"Barrier Knob," came the immediate answer. "You'll need an axe and crampons, and it's probably worth chucking in a helmet; rock does come off the bluffs above from time to time."

Thirty minutes later I wandered into the lower reaches of Gertrude Valley – the Darran Mountains' most-used gateway – and was entranced.

Apart from a couple of brief sections of lichen-draped beech forest, the walk to the summit is completely above the bushline. The scale of the surroundings and the architecture of the peaks make it incredibly scenic. Waterfalls cascade from Talbot's snowfields high above the Psychopath Wall, and ahead the valley terminates in a gigantic parabola of rock carved by glaciers, that forms a wall linking the massifs of Barrier Peak and Mt Crosscut.

The valley is escaped via a rough track (marked with the occasional cairn) and you gain height rapidly as the route weaves through snowgrass, scree and impossibly grippy diorite slabs until you reach the icy water of Black Lake, cradled in a basin of rock shortly below Gertrude Saddle. It's a great spot to stop for a break before the final climb to the saddle.

In situ cables point the way up the whaleback of rock above the lake, followed by a small boulder field and a short climb to one of the best views in New Zealand. The western slopes of Gertrude Saddle plunge steeply into the Gulliver Valley. To the left is Mt Talbot and to the right; Barrier Knob. It's hard dragging yourself away from the saddle sometimes: on a calm day it's an idyllic spot, with warm rock slabs, alpine

plants and a view that makes you keep on gazing.

It's worth making a move though, because the view from Barrier is even more rewarding. The route follows rock slabs, snow grass (extremely slippery and the route is exposed in places) and finally a brief snowfield.

As a Darrans' first-timer, arriving on that rocky summit was to view a new world. The panorama stretches from Mitre Peak – only a few kilometres distant – to Mt Pembroke and the ivory giants Mts Tutoko and Madeline; to the classic rock climber's mountain, Sabre Peak. In between, endless rocky peaks top the range, and at their feet, distant lakes twinkle, encouraging you into the next new valley.

Time 4-6hr Grade Moderate

- Mark Watson

MT ADAMS, 2208m

Adams Wilderness Area, West Coast



In the south west of the South Island, where SH6 cuts across the toe of the ranges between Harihari and Whataroa, a giant seaward-facing outlier of the Main Divide stands more than two vertical kilometres directly above the highway. This massive summit is Mt Adams, its high peak topping out at 2208m, whereas the highway, where you will start your ascent, is barely above sea level at a paltry 70m.

With statistics like this to underpin the effort involved to reach the summit, you can be assured of a long, hard push to capture this remarkable peak.

It's remarkable for several reasons. Firstly, it is the highest summit directly accessible from the highway anywhere on the West Coast. Secondly, the view is absolutely awe-inspiring and stretches from Mts Cook and Tasman, all the way through the Adams Wilderness Area to the far distant summits of the Whitcombe Valley. Thirdly, the seaward view rivals that of the Alps with a panorama of lakes, wetlands, braided river, and the long slow sweep of the West Coast where the ever-present rollers of the Tasman Sea cast their spume on the beaches.

And lastly, if it is possible to cover the superlatives of this mountain in only four major points, the remoteness and beauty of the upper mountain are reason enough to attempt the climb; where the landscape changes from deep forest cover, to tussock fields, gravel, rock and ice.

The climb begins up Dry Stream to the second major feeder where a marked track



Great views towards Rakiura's interior from Mt Anglem

heads onto the spur on the true left side of this feeder to eventually gain the open tussock – it is very steep. This is South Westland and bad weather on the tops can be serious, not to mention making route finding extremely difficult and, possibly worst of all, no view!

Ice axe and crampons are essential at any season, as the small ice cap glacier needs to be traversed if you want to gain the high peak which is 500m south-east of the middle peak.

Going lightweight by putting in a high camp at around 1600m is a good option. From there you can make the summit and out to the road in a day. Make sure you are fit and go!

Time Two days Grade Difficult

- Pat Barrett



MT ALEXANDER, 1958m

Otira-Kopara Forest Conservation Area, West Coast



A good track leads to Camp Creek Hut from Lake Brunner Road. The track continues steeply to the tussock where large tarn troughs at about 1300m offer idyllic campsites. Beyond, the ridge climbs and narrows to more exposed travel on rockier terrain, with scree sidles in places that can be used to avoid rocky schist blocks along the ridge. Then climb up to the rocky blocks that make up the summit.

Camping on the summit is possible and makes for a stunning place to wake up, with views from Lake Moana to Mt Rolleston and the whole Taramakau stretched out below.

Time 2-3 days (6-7hr to tarns; 4hr to summit) **Grade** Moderate

ANGELUS PEAK, 2075m

Nelson Lakes National Park, Tasman



Angelus Peak provides trampers with a worthy destination for an afternoon's scramble from Angelus Hut.

From the hut, take the poled Mt Cedric Track, then branch off towards Sunset Saddle on a cairned route. From Sunset Saddle, at about 1900m, it's a straightforward scramble to the summit of Angelus, with a couple of rockier sections to negotiate. More adventurous climbers might like to tackle the ridge leading directly up from Hinapouri Tarn.

The summit offers good views over Robert Ridge, the Angelus Basin, Lake Rotorua and the higher peaks of the Travers Range.

Time Two days **Grade** Moderate

MT ANGLEM, 980m

Rakiura National Park



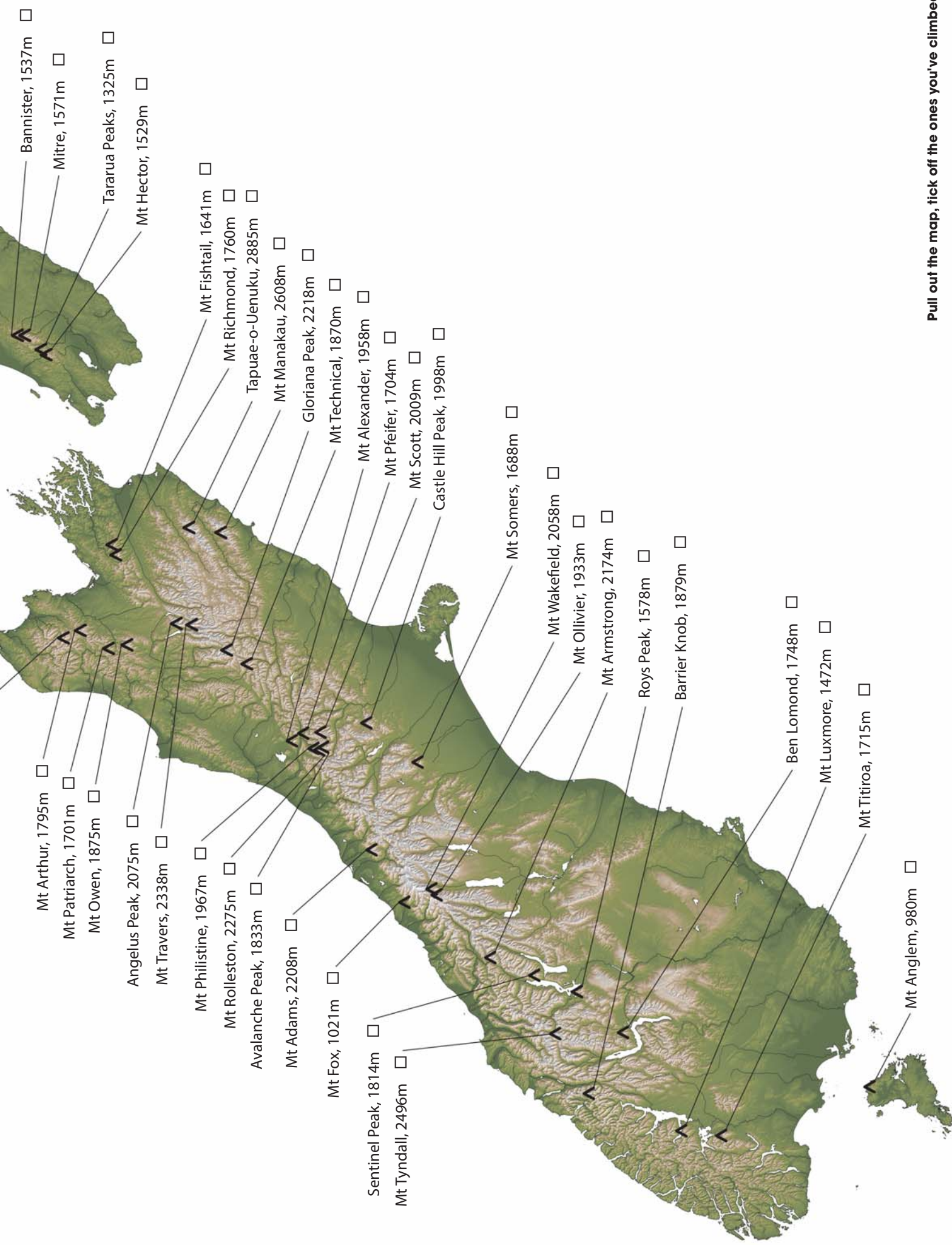
If you've been committed enough to make it to Stewart Island to tramp, then you might as well visit its highest point. While it's only a diminutive 980m, it's a long uphill hike from sea level and if there's been much rain it can get pretty muddy.

While it's possible to camp near the summit, it's a windy and exposed place, so most people make the climb from Christmas Village Hut, two days walk (12 hours) from Halfmoon Bay. Not only do you walk through some interesting vegetation zones but the view of the remote and rugged interior of the island and north to the South Island are well worth it.

Time 4-5 days **Grade** Easy

NEW ZEALAND'S 50 BEST TRAMPING PEAKS





Pull out the map, tick off the ones you've climbed

MT ARMSTRONG, 2174m

Mt Aspiring National
Park, West Coast

The 1700m climb from road to summit on the Brewster Track is a bit of a grunt, following a long spur which is consistently steep, but never too demanding. There's a chance to get some good scrambling practise in and climbers are rewarded with gorgeous

views of Mt Brewster, the Tasman Sea and the unmistakable sight of Mt Aspiring. This is either a long slog of a day-hike or a moderate two-day tramp with the option of staying at Brewster Hut.

Time 1-2 days **Grade** Moderate



AVALANCHE PEAK, 1833m

Reader **Tania Seward** discovers
Avalanche Peak is an ideal first
foray into alpine territory

At first glance, Avalanche Peak in Arthur's Pass National Park appears rather daunting. Its bush-clad eastern aspect towers over Arthur's Pass and the summit itself cannot be seen from the highway at its base.

For keen and experienced trampers, Avalanche Peak is an excellent first foray into the alpine zone. Part of the mountain's appeal is its relative accessibility. There aren't many mountains in New Zealand where you can park your car outside a café, get your caffeine fix and then wander 100m down the road to the start of the track.

Likewise, the pub across the road from the car park makes an excellent spot for a celebratory meal and drink after a successful ascent.

Two to three hours hard graft up

Avalanche Peak Track lands you 600 vertical metres above the village and with stellar views of nearby peaks Blimit, Mt Cassidy and Mt Aicken. Another one to two hours along an increasingly narrow ridgeline pops you out on the summit, where the southern side of Mt Rolleston and the Crow Glacier dominate the landscape. For a moment, it's easy to believe you're on top of the world.

The descent from the summit is no less impressive than the ascent. Taking the longer but easier Scott's Track means ever-increasing views of the nearby Devil's Punchbowl Falls, and a gradual shift in vegetation from alpine lichens to lush mountain beech forest.

For the more adventurous, it's possible to ascend Avalanche Peak, traverse across Lyell Peak and descend via Mt Bealey. If an overnight adventure appeals, drop from the summit down to Crow Hut before walking out via the Waimakariri River.

Time 8hr **Grade** Moderate



On top of the world on Avalanche Peak

MT ARTHUR, 1795m

Kahurangi National Park,
Tasman

A fair proportion of those who live in Tasman Bay will have spent a satisfying day climbing Mt Arthur. Graham Valley Road (currently recommended for 4WD vehicles only) knocks off the first 900m of ascent. From the car park it's an easy stroll through sub-alpine forest to Mt Arthur Hut before the fun really begins.

The trail follows the north east ridge, skirting sinkholes, some of which drop hundreds of metres below the surface. Then a steep finale takes you to the summit ridge with views of the much wilder, harder-to-reach summits spread across the park.

Time 7hr **Grade** Moderate



NICK GROVES

Descending Mt Arthur

BANNISTER, 1537m

**Tararua Forest Park,
Wellington**

Deep in the Tararua Range, Bannister is a challenging tramping peak typically traversed during a number of possible crossings and circuits.

It's a steep and craggy summit, typical of the slightly more rugged northern part of the range and the section between its summit and Waingawa requires a cool head for heights. Many parties have used a rope to haul or lower packs on this section over the years.

Time 3-5 days **Grade** Moderate

BEN LOMOND, 1748m

Wakatipu District, Otago

You won't be alone climbing this peak. For

many, it's a refreshing hangover cure as well as a classic day-trip for the outdoorsy Queenstown holiday maker. It can be climbed from the town itself, but many cheat and skip the first 450m by taking the gondola.

By the time you reach the saddle you've left the tree ferns well behind and a final steep surge to the summit gives views back to Lake Wakatipu and Queenstown as well as the likes of The Remarkables, and Mts Earnslaw and Aspiring.

Time 6-8hr **Grade** Easy

BREAM HEAD / TE WHARA, 488m

Bream Head Scenic Reserve, Northland

On the peninsula that is Whangarei Heads, a

line of eroded volcanic plugs stab into the sky – these include Mt Manaia and The Lion. The highest, however, is Bream Head which rises steeply from the Pacific.

Rather than walk the full five-hour route between Urquharts Bay and Ocean Beach, the quickest route to the summit is via the track up and over to Peach Cove, with its renovated hut and great swimming.

This steep, grassy track pushes through regenerating manuka for about an hour to gain the saddle. Once you've caught your breath, head east, traversing the main undulating ridgeline along to the top. Begin the steep descent towards Ocean Beach; only then will you notice the detour to the top of Bream Head, where spectacular coastal views await.

Time 2hr climb **Grade** Easy

MT FOX, 1021m

Westland Tai Poutini National
Park, West Coast

The ascent through the forest is steep and when you reach the 1021m summit of Mt Fox the climbing isn't yet done. That's because the exceptional view of the Southern Alps, Fox Glacier and out to the Tasman Sea is gained from Pt1345, a kilometre or so further on. Best climbed early in the morning, as cloud tends to roll in during the afternoon obscuring the extraordinary view.

Time 8hr Grade Moderate

Fox Glacier and Southern Alps from Mt Fox

CASTLE HILL PEAK, 1998m

Torlesse-Korowai Tussockland
Park, Canterbury

Your car will kindly climb with you the first 945m of ascent to Porters Pass. From here, make your own way through the scrub and tussock, which soon give way to gravel and shattered rock on the approach to Foggy Peak. From there, drop into two saddles along easy-going terrain before reaching the summit of Castle Hill Peak. The views are stunning, stretching from the clearly-visible Aoraki/Mt Cook to the Port Hills and much in between.

Time 7-10hr Grade Moderate

MT FISHTAIL, 1641m

Mt Richmond Forest
Park, Marlborough

Recognised by the oddly-shaped slip on its lofty flanks, Mt Fishtail is one of the classic climbs in Mt Richmond Forest Park. However, it's only frequented by die-hard trampers or locals from around Blenheim.

Accessed off Northbank Road, running parallel with the Wairau River, the trackhead is on Pine Valley Road. A leisurely amble along the track is abruptly cut short with a cold crossing.

Then the real ascent begins, hauling yourself up a vertiginous spur track, which eases after many hours' hard yakka through beech forest. One must then tip-toe along a rocky spine and cross a giant scree towards the diminutive four-bunk Fishtail Hut. Situated on the south side of the mountain and at the mercy of gale force winds, this is no place to be in a winter storm.

After a straightforward 200m climb to the obvious low point above the hut, the route heads south-east along unstable rock to the summit cairn.

Time 4-5hr climb Grade Moderate



GLORIANA PEAK, 2218m

St James Conservation Area, Canterbury



From the summit of Lewis Pass Highway, a rocky and sometimes snowy spire can be seen in the far distance rising high above the Upper Maruia Valley. Gloriana Peak has approaches from not only the Upper Maruia, but also from the Ada and Matakaitaki valleys.

Gloriana and her sister summit Faerie Queene, 2236m, are relatively popular peaks for those who regularly traverse the St James Walkway which runs along the southern and eastern sides of the Spenser Mountains, of which these two are among the highest summits.

Gloriana is the more attractive, owing to its sharp profile from the south. The southern approach is particularly interesting as it involves climbing into the high tarn basins and over a 2000m col just to reach the peak. From this point, the ridge can be traversed, or, with a small detour into the head of a feeder of the upper West Matakaitaki, the easier northern slopes can be climbed to the summit.

The view from here encompasses just about all of Nelson Lakes National Park as well as the Lewis Pass National Reserve and peaks as far away as the Kaikoura and Raglan ranges.

Directly below the summit, to the south, are the inky black depths of a large alpine tarn adding to the spectacle from the summit. An ice axe and sometimes crampons will be required on this peak.

Time Two days **Grade** Difficult

NICK GROVES

MT EGMONT/ TARANAKI,

2518m

Reader **Heather Davidson** recounts climbing Mt Taranaki from Syme Hut in winter



It was just a few days after my 17th birthday when we walked out the door of Syme Hut and into cloud. Luckily, it rolled away as quickly as it came and we were in brilliant sunshine.

The snow was firm and made for nice, crisp cramponing. To get to the summit, we descended a few metres to a saddle, then climbed 600m up the south face. There are no flat spots or downhill; nothing to ease the task of ascending - at least not until you reach the crater rim, which is only about 30m below the summit.

The slope started off benignly enough but

gradually became steeper. Soon we were walking in zigzags to ease the burden on our calves. For the last 300 vertical metres, the snow merged with small sastrugi ice. This required care to walk on as it would have been very easy to roll an ankle, sending you plummeting downwards.

At every corner of the zigzag, we would cut a platform so we could rest our ankles. The mountain's face got steeper and was a bit out of my comfort zone, but we pressed on.

Once the rim was gained, we sat down with relief; the first real rest we had in about two hours since leaving Syme Hut. Crampon straps were tightened for the final assault of the summit. We walked along the crater for a little bit before reaching the very top. We stood on the summit, victorious.

Well, half victorious. We still had to get down.

Time 8-10hr **Grade** Moderate



HEATHER DAVIDSON



MARK WATSON

View along the Dress Circle towards Mt Hector, Tararua

MT HECTOR, 1529m

**Tararua Forest Park,
Wellington**



Undoubtedly the classic 'tick' for Wellingtonians, Mt Hector is an iconic New Zealand peak and is easily recognised in photos by its distinctive wooden memorial cross to Wellington Tramping Club members killed during the two world wars. The cross can take on a dramatic stature when it's thickly coated in rime ice after a winter storm.

On the western edge of the range, Hector is most easily accessed from Otaki Forks via the historic Field Hut and the new Kime Hut. Kime makes the best overnight stay, but the

peak is also attainable as a day trip from Otaki Forks for the fit.

Time 1-3 days **Grade** Moderate

HIKURANGI, 1752m

**Raukumara Forest Park,
Gisborne**



Maunga Hikurangi is the highest non-volcanic mountain in the North Island. The most appropriate translation for Hiku-rangi is 'the end of the sky' – when not hidden in mist, it's the first point in the country to catch the morning sun. Often done as a three-day tramp, one day would suffice for the very fit.

Leave SH35 near Ruatoria, drive Tapuaeroa

Valley Rd to the Raparapaririki Homestead, then cross a bridge over to Pakihiroa Station. Permission must be sought from Te Runanga O Ngati Porou to use the steep farm road for 3-4 hours. A track then climbs Alaska Spur for half an hour to the Gisborne Tramping and Canoeing Club's hut, nestled on a grassy bench at 1200m. Ngati Porou took over the building more than a decade ago and require a fee.

Behind Hikurangi Hut, a poled route sidles through tussock around the mountain's western flanks to a tarn. A steep, but not technical scramble up a rocky chute leads to the ridgeline where the wooden trig is usually visible, only five minutes away.

Time 8-11 hr return **Grade** Moderate



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A party high on the
north east ridge of Mt
Manakau

IRON HILL, 1695m

**Kahurangi National Park,
Tasman**



Climbing from the Cobb Reservoir to Sylvester Hut takes 1.5 hours, sweating up the old vehicle track under laden packs. This is my favourite DOC hut, in my favourite corner of the country. It's layered with human history and route options. From here, you can tackle the tricky traverse over Mt Benson to Fenella Hut. Or follow the old cairned trail past Lake Lillie to Diamond Lake, then along to remote Ruby Lake. In 1858, surveyor James Mackay discovered and named these lakes and mountains. He was vainly hoping to find a possible road-link with the Buller River, much further south. Based at his campsite beside Lake Lockett, the young explorer climbed Iron Hill 'just after sunrise'.

An easy route follows the bush edge from Sylvester Hut to the lake. Onward, across the swampy bridge between Little Sylvester Lake and over a hillock to Iron Lake, in winter a flat, frozen expanse encircled by a wall of rock and ice rising into a perfect blue sky. Search for a safe passage through rocky ramparts which tower above the lake outlet. A large cairn indicates a route onto the eastern shoulder of Iron Hill. More cairns lead around a buttress into a gully – if this is filled with snow, this gut gives access to the tops, using an ice-axe for support.

Topping out on Iron Hill, the highest point on the Lockett Range, you'll be greeted with a 360-degree panorama which is still exactly as described by Mackay in 1858. Due west is Mt Domett; through a gap in the Karamea Gorge is the Tasman Sea, south-east is Mt Arthur, north-east is Mt Egmont, a faint mirage floating above the Taranaki Bight – a trumper's paradise.

Time 4-5hr climb **Grade** Moderate

- Raymond Salisbury

MT KARIOI, 756m

Te Uku, Waikato



An old volcano that first erupted some 2.9 million years ago, Mt Karioi has long since

become extinct. Its eroded remains form a commanding backdrop to the township of Raglan. The Karioi Track provides the most direct route to the summit and has ladders and sections of chain on the steeper sections (a less strenuous option is the Wairake Track). The summit, marked by a telecommunications aerial, has views over the Raglan, Aotea and Kawhia harbours, as well as Pirongia and the more distant peaks of Maungatautari, Te Aroha and Pureora.

Time 6-7hr return **Grade** Moderate

MT LUXMORE, 1472m

**Fiordland National
Park, Southland**



High above Lake Te Anau on the Kepler Track, Mt Luxmore is one of a series of summits at a similar altitude that run along the crest of the range above the track. It is readily and often climbed from the Kepler as it stands barely 100m higher than the track's highest point.

The view from the summit covers Lake Te Anau, the Te Anau Basin, and Lake Manapouri.

Time One day **Grade** Easy

MT MANAKAU, 2608m

**Mt Manakau Scenic
Reserve, Canterbury**



The Kaikouras are a young and active range featuring fractured rock and a barren landscape. Yet these very features bring their own uniqueness and charm. The attractions begin with the access up the Hapuku Gorge, where high greywacke bluffs tower over the gravelly riverbed.

A sidle track leads through wonderful podocarp stands here, mainly totara. Beyond the gorge, follow the true left branch and climb up to Stace Saddle. Surveyor Spur keeps the climb honest, until, as you reach 2000m, the angle eases. Some camp in these upper basins, but water can be short in autumn.

From the saddle, scramble up the ridge, sidling pinnacles on the Clarence side if you need to. Some may like the support of a rope here. From the range crest,

the Clarence country spreads out below, revealing the huge scale of the area. On the other side of the range, the Pacific Ocean rolls off to the horizon while the Kaikoura Peninsula spreads out like a map below. The views are fantastic, but Manakau is also memorable to me for another reason.

In 1971, when I was young and sillier, my school friend Lauchie and I made our first trip to climb the peak. We hitched a ride from Picton over a long weekend. The ascent proved straightforward, with fresh snow dusting the upper slopes.

Lauchie and I were never ones for retracing our steps, and it being mid-afternoon in late May, we decided to traverse to Mt Uwerau, a 2213m outlier to the south, to make a round trip of it. Part-way across we stopped in the dark at a rocky section to wait out the night. I have never experienced such cold.

We had no bivvy gear. My only clothes were shorts and a thin jersey under my windproofs. We lay huddled on the gravel in a tube of plastic as the frost crystals grew longer around us. For dinner we shared a tube of condensed milk. With over 12 hours' darkness, all eternity passed that night.

With sunrise we continued our traverse and descended to the Hapuku. Not having water bottles on the climb, we then had our first drink in 27 hours.

I've been up Manakau a few times since, when it is mantled in winter snow, and camped high up. Great trips all, but not quite as memorable as the first time.

Time 2-3 days **Grade** Moderate

- Geoff Spearpoint

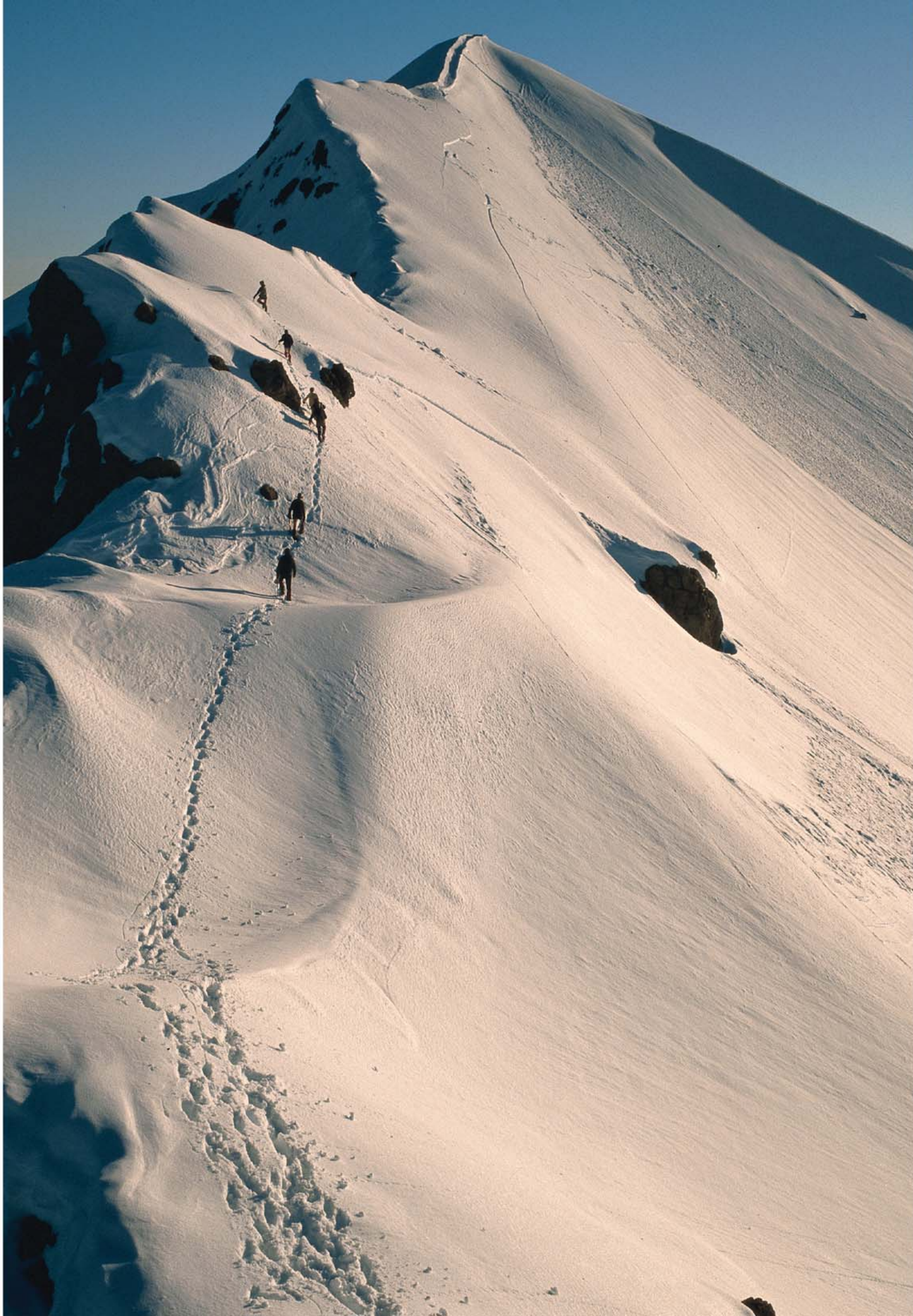
MITRE, 1571m

**Tararua Forest Park,
Wellington**



The highest peak in the Tararuas can be reached from the Upper Waingara Road-end via Mitre Flats Hut. Head up through beech-podocarp forest and, on reaching the tree line, scramble up a rocky slope to Peggy's Peak, then up to Mitre itself. Ruapehu, Mt Taranaki and Tapuae-o-Uenuku can all be seen from the summit on a clear day.

Time 12hr **Grade** Moderate





MT NGAURUHOE, 2287m

Reader **Neil Silverwood** describes the summer and winter contrasts on Mt Ngauruhoe in Tongariro National Park

Aside from its geological history, what makes Mt Ngauruhoe so special is the dramatic change in the landscape between summer and winter. Dry and barren in summer, its slopes are covered by loose scree. On a nice day it's a straightforward climb. In winter, though, the mountain changes dramatically, its slopes blanketed by snow, ice and sastrugi and the climb becomes a serious challenge for trampers.

In both seasons, the best route begins from the southern edge of South Crater, climbing directly up.

In summer, the climb is popular and

achievable, though there is an inherent risk of rockfall. It takes about two hours to reach the top.

It's not your usual summit. At the northern edge of the rim you look down into a massive crater. Often plumes of acidic smoke leach out from beneath rocks. Some areas have been undercut, leaving small caves behind. It's an eerie scene. A place where one has the feeling of standing on top of a sleeping dragon that could stir to life at any moment.

During winter, the climb becomes a more difficult undertaking. Trampers will need to carry ice axes and crampons. The mountain

often undergoes a melt-freeze cycle. Sun during the day melts the top layer of the snowpack, creating corn snow. Then at night it refreezes.

One great way to experience Ngauruhoe is to camp on the plateau east of the crater. The view of Mt Ruapehu and sunset is stunning. This is only an option in good weather as the top is extremely exposed. Water is also an issue, especially in autumn.

A summer tramp up Ngauruhoe is a cool way to get away from the crowds, while a winter ascent is challenging and something you will remember for a lifetime.

Time 4hr car park to crater **Grade** Moderate



Mt Olivier stands high over Mueller Hut – a great sight after a steep climb from the valley



OHUINGA, 1686m

Ruahine Forest Park,
Hawke's Bay



The approach to Ohuinga is what makes this trip a classic. Sawtooth Ridge is an infamous section of the Ruahine Range, named for its serrated profile when viewed from the east. While not an easy undertaking in the wrong weather, or in snow-plastered conditions, in summer it's a reasonably straightforward tramp to traverse over its length, climbing Tiraha and Ohuinga en route.

The steepest section is probably approaching the summit of Ohuinga itself from Black Ridge, so it's perhaps advisable for those who may be nervous of the exposure to do this in the uphill direction.

While the ridge crest of the main Sawtooth is indeed narrow, a well-worn trail sidles any small crags, and the footing is good. Tarn Biv or Howletts Hut make good places to spend a night, and in summer the area abounds with native flowers.

The approach to either hut up the Tukituki River requires normal river levels; it can become a difficult beast to ford when in high flow.

Time Ohuinga summit via Rosvalls Track, Tarn Biv and Black Ridge 6-8hr. Out via Sawtooth Ridge, Howletts Hut and Tukituki River: 6-9hr **Grade** Moderate

MT OLLIVIER, 1933m

Aoraki/Mt Cook National
Park, Canterbury



For the classic view of New Zealand's tallest mountain, take the popular route to Mueller Hut, via Sealy Tarns. The tarns mirror Aoraki and Sefton beautifully and the hut is like having a front-row seat. From there it's just a 30min climb to the summit of Ollivier. The climb also rewards with great views of the dramatic ice falls on Mt Sefton and overlooking the Mueller Glacier as it winds its way towards Mt Burns.

Time 9hr **Grade** Moderate

MT OWEN, 1875m

Kahurangi National Park,
Tasman



Climbing Kahurangi National Park's highest summit is a unique experience due to the unusual karst landscape. Millions of years of intense pressure has turned the limestone rock into marble. Tramping over these giant slabs and jumping over rock crevasses becomes a major feature of the climb. Many climbers from the northern side stay at Granity Pass Hut, from which it's a three-hour climb to the summit.

Time 2-3 days Grade Easy

MT PATRIARCH, 1701m

Kahurangi National Park,
Tasman



This fine peak is more often viewed than climbed, as its shapely wedge dominates the horizon to the north from Mt Owen.

Mt Patriarch has at least one advantage over its more popular neighbour: a perfect two or three-day round trip is possible, including a couple of classic old six-berth huts and there's a real 1700m summit to climb along the way.

It was late May when I finally got around to a trip on the north side of the Wangapeka.

Starting from Rolling Junction car park, the initial three hours followed the broad, well-maintained Wangapeka Track along the river.

At a footbridge over the main river, the Wangapeka is left behind and the well-graded old miner's track heads north alongside the lushly vegetated Kiwi Stream.

Kiwi Saddle Hut, in a forest clearing at around the 1000m contour, is a delightful place to overnight, complete with open fireplace and views to the Mt Luna Range.

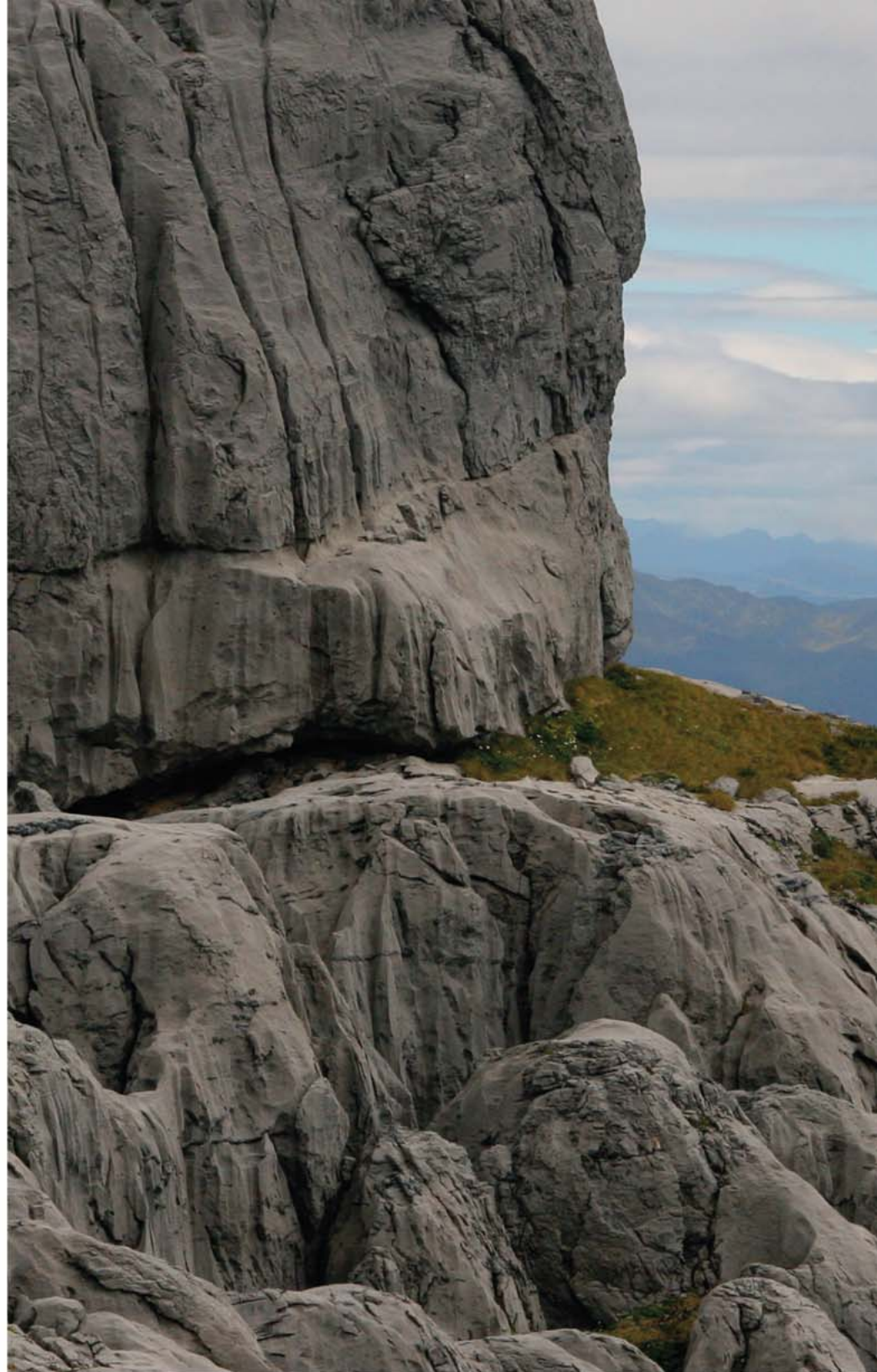
With the temperature outside dropping below zero, a glowing fire along with an after-dinner mug of port made this hut a home from home.

Morning arrived fine and frosty for the 700m climb to the top of Mt Patriarch. Steep in places, the track threads through a subalpine array of neinei and twisted tree daisy before reaching the bushline and open tussocklands above.

Dumping our heavy packs at the start of a side track to the summit, it took about 45min to reach the first, and highest, of the three tops.

At 1701m, there are extensive views in all directions over a large chunk of Kahurangi National Park. So many peaks and ranges to identify, but it is the sprawling massif of Mt Owen across the Wangapeka Valley that dominates the southern skyline.

Retracing our steps to our packs, we continued along open tops with the peaks of



Baldy, Gomorrah and Sodom stretched out to the north-east.

Chummies Track lies at the eastern end of the Patriarch massif, with a steep descent through scrub to John Reid Hut. As the day was wearing thin, we settled down for a second night of 'six-bunk luxury', with a blazing fire soon completing the scene.

The following morning our knees felt the almost 1000m descent down Chummies Track back to the main river, which was easily forded in autumnal low-flow.

Time 2-3 days Grade Moderate

- Nick Groves

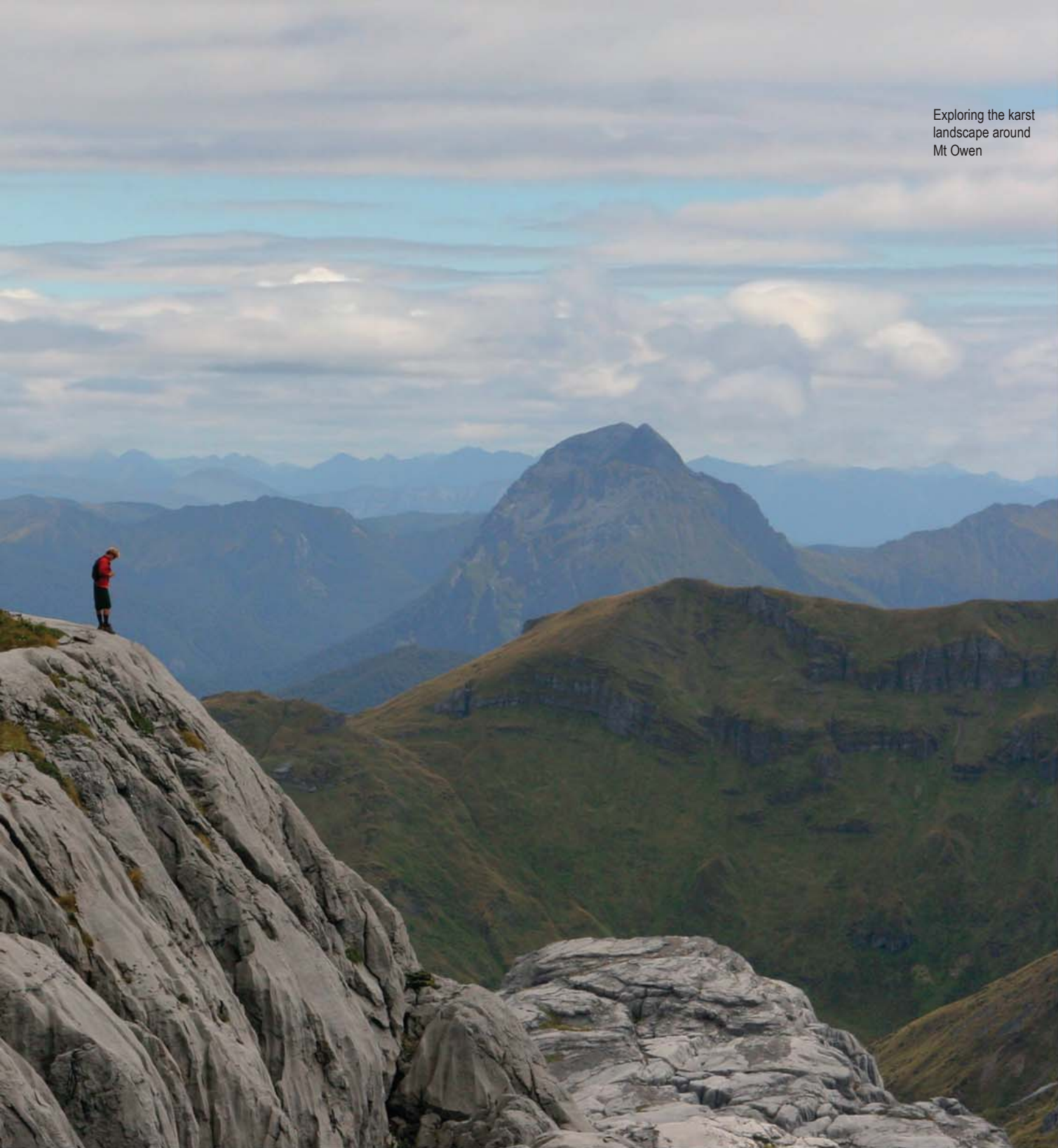
MT PFEIFER, 1704m

Arthur's Pass National
Park, West Coast



This peak is in a wonderful isolated corner of Westland wilderness that can be approached from near Otira.

I have stood on Mt Pfeifer at sunset, watching the warmth of the evening sun strike the mountains surrounding the Otehaake, bathing them with bold golden rays of intense light before the valleys plunged into darkness. Far below, rivers murmured in the depths.



JOHNATHAN ESPERWWWILDERNESSPHOTOGRAPHS.COM

The basin beneath Pfeifer has a relatively new bivvy, and as the dew fell we retreated to its warmth.

The peak is best approached from the Deception Swingbridge over the Otira and climbing up Paratu Stream to Waharoa Saddle where volunteers Frank and Honora have helped keep the marked route up to the tops usable. Cross east over the range at about 1480m and sidle across pleasant basins to the bivvy and up to the peak.

Time Two days **Grade** Moderate

- Geoff Spearpoint

MT PHILISTINE, 1967m

Arthur's Pass National Park, Canterbury



Mt Philistine is a neighbouring peak of Mt Rolleston and is a moderately challenging climb, particularly the access route to the upper basin and summit slopes through the bluffs.

The normal route heads up the Otira River Track, crosses on the footbridge and then heads directly up through scrub, scree and tussock to the high shoulder west of Warnocks Knob.

The bluffs are climbed from the west end of

the shoulder, at their lowest point, to the basin above. A rough ground trail will be found and some cairns. Take special care not to stray too far to the north or south of the main route up, as very steep terrain awaits and there have been some fatalities here. In mist, or with snow and ice on the route, you should perhaps postpone the climb for a better day.

The summit view is spectacular, with grand views of Mt Rolleston and Westland. Take care again on the descent to find the exact spot at the top of the bluffs (marked by a cairn) to make a safe return.

Time 3hr **Grade** Difficult \



Mt Richmond's summit cairn

PIRONGIA MOUNTAIN, 959m

Pirongia Forest Park,
Waikato



This forest-covered volcano (activity ceased 2.5 million years ago) dominates the western Waikato skyline and a viewing tower at the summit provides panoramic views over the district – even sighting Mt Taranaki on a good day.

The Tirohanga Track provides the most popular route to the top, becoming narrower as it gets higher, eventually climbing over great rock tors.

The Link Track provides a good return trip and Pahautea Hut (20 bunks – due to be re-opened by early 2015) sits close to the summit.

Time 3-5hr to summit **Grade** Easy

POUAKAI, 1400m

Egmont National Park,
Taranaki



An accessible year-round peak with spectacular views of Mt Taranaki. Many of the classic shots of its larger neighbour have been taken from the summit of Pouakai or thereabouts. Can be a day walk or overnighter, or part of the 2-3 day Pouakai Circuit.

Time 6-7hr **Grade** Moderate

RANGITOTO, 260m

Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park,
Auckland



We promise we haven't just included Rangitoto because of its proximity to Auckland. It's picked because it's a completely different experience to any other peak you're likely to climb in New Zealand.

Being such a young volcano (there's a bit of debate over its actual age, but between 700-900 years old seems a safe bet) the rock which spewed from the summit crater still looks like black rubble, or crushed Oreo biscuit. It's alarmingly unstable if you try to walk across it and would quickly destroy the soles of your boots.

The tracks that have been built here make the hill an easy climb and the Coastal Track heading east towards Motutapu Island makes an interesting around-walk.

The lava caves close to the summit are a great distraction (bring a torch) and the views from the summit are far-reaching, as Rangitoto is the highest peak in the vicinity.

Crossing the water from Devonport or Auckland City adds to the experience and turns the trip into a full-day event.

Time 2-3hr **Grade** Easy

MT RICHMOND, 1760m

Mt Richmond Forest
Park, Marlborough



The second-highest summit in its namesake park, Mt Richmond is a delightful day-trip from Nelson. Access is from Top Valley, and if you can 4WD across Armchair Stream up to Jubilee Flat, you'll keep your feet dry and save an hour.

Once on the unforgivingly steep spur, the forest track eventually evens out, then you pick your way along a knife-edge ridgeline towards Grass Knob. Sidle around the headwaters to Richmond Saddle Hut, a useful stopover.

Above the bushline, it's an unnerving scramble across 40-degree slopes of shattered scree and teetering boulders. Stop to admire the little things like vegetable sheep and pen-wiper plants. The slow grind to the summit cairn takes an hour, but the views are simply breathtaking.

This pyramidal peak was named after a prominent farming family in the Wairau. On a clear day, Mt Richmond provides a spectacular platform to gaze at the world below. To the north, Taranaki's symmetrical cone appears, ghostly above the Tasman; to the south, Tapuae-o-Uenuku.

Time 4-6hr **Grade** Moderate

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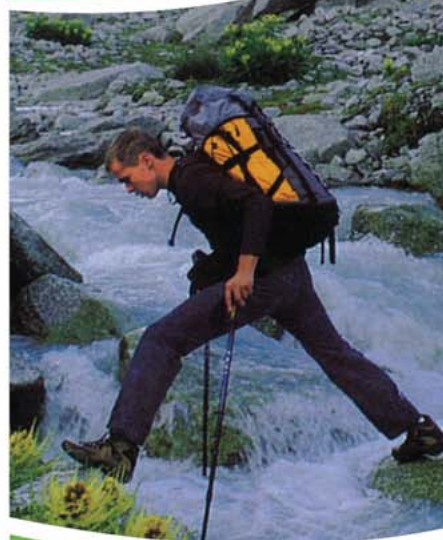


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MARK WATSON

Celebrating reaching Mt Rolleston's Low Peak

MT ROLLESTON, 2275m

Arthur's Pass National Park, Canterbury

Arthur's Pass National Park's landmark summit is Mt Rolleston, though it's not the highest (that's Mt Murchison, 2408m). It is the most accessible 2000m glaciated summit in the South Island though. The only other contender would be Mt Brewster at Haast Pass. Rolleston can be readily climbed in a long day from Christchurch via almost any of the routes available on the peak and is therefore a great training summit for alpinists and trampers wishing to extend their skills.

It is a reasonably challenging peak and requires good route finding, as well as an ice axe and crampons year-round, and sometimes a rope. The peak has claimed a number of lives – this has often occurred by underestimating the dangers present.

Time One day **Grade** Difficult

ROYS PEAK, 1578m

The Stack Conservation Area, Otago

A well-graded track which thoroughly

rewards with mesmerising views over Lake Wanaka, its peninsulas and islands, and the peaks of Mt Aspiring National Park. The classic day-trip from the town is closed for lambing between October 1 and November 10.

Time 5-6hr **Grade** Easy

MT RUAPEHU, 2797m

Tongariro National Park, Manawatu-Wanganui

Climbing Ruapehu can be easily done in any season, but winter, when the volcanoes of Tongariro National Park are draped in snowy cloaks, seems to be the best and most exciting.

The easiest way to the summit is from the Whakapapa Ski Field and you can knock a couple of hours off the ascent by riding the Waterfall Express chairlift. Here you can check avalanche conditions with the ski patrol before cramponing your way to the summit – the line is obvious.

The Summit Plateau can be reached in three-four hours and from here a further 30min is needed to climb to Crater Lake – a unique spectacle well worth the

extra effort.

Most do the return trip in a day, but camping on the plateau is a marvellous, though cold, experience. If this sounds like you, options abound: return the same way the following day or why not consider traversing the mountain by descending the western Mangatoetoenui Glacier to Tukino Ski Field? The northern Waihohonu Ridge is trickier to reach and will lead you to the Whakapapa-Waihohonu Track which you can take to Whakapapa Village.

Time 3-4hr to Summit Plateau; 1hr return to Crater Lake **Grade** Moderate

MT SCOTT, 2009m

Arthur's Pass National Park, Canterbury

Standing steeply above Sudden Valley Stream, Mt Scott and the Polar Range have much easier slopes rising from the Edwards Valley. From its summit there are sweeping views to rugged Mt Franklin and across to Mt Oates. It's an airy open view, best enjoyed when there is still a bit of snow around in early summer.

Time Two days **Grade** Moderate-difficult

SENTINEL PEAK, 1814m

Hawea Conservation Park,
Otago



Sentinel Peak is strategically located above The Neck of Lake Hawea, the short arm of the lake that heads the Haast Pass Highway across to Lake Wanaka. Sentinel is set well back from the lakes and is a reasonably demanding climb entailing several kilometres of ridgetop travel,

from where there is a final scramble to the summit.

It is accessed from Kidds Bush camping area up a marked track into the Sawyer Burn and its small hut.

Time 1-2 days **Grade** Moderate

MT SOMERS, 1688m

Reader **David Barnes** climbs
Mt Somers every which way

The tracks around Mt Somers Conservation Area make a good low altitude destination when the weather's bad. When it's good, the summit provides extensive views of the Alps from Arrowsmith to Aoraki and more, as well as of the Canterbury Plains.

There are three approaches. They can be done as up-and-backs or crossovers, either as day trips or part of a weekend.

The marked track starts at Sharplin Falls Reserve and follows the South Face Track to Staveley Hill. It then knocks off the next 500m on a brutally steep spur, with just a few minutes along the gentle summit ridge to get your breath back before reaching the top. Being south facing, this route can require an ice axe and crampons into early summer or after unseasonable snow fall.

The second, unmarked, route involves a scramble from the saddle on the Mt

Somers Walkway, followed by a gentle ascent up the edge of the mountain's northern escarpment.

Personally, I prefer the third route; From Woolshed Creek car park, cross the creek and climb 400m up Rhyolite Ridge. That's the worst bit out of the way. Follow the South Face Track north-east for 1km, then leave the track and head up the obvious broad ridge.

After a 400m ascent, the gradient eases slightly and the unmarked route follows the line of the escarpment that forms the southern ramparts of Mt Somers.

Unlike most of the Canterbury foothills, Mt Somers is volcanic in origin, which makes for some interesting geological features. At one point, a small basalt bluff appears to block the way but an easy tussock ramp breaches its defences.

Soon, you're surmounting a series of false summits. Eventually, the distinctive structure marking the real summit appears and 10 minutes later you're there.

Time 7hr **Grade** Moderate



A picturesque tarn on the western slopes of Mt Somers

SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

SERIOUS KIT FOR SERIOUS SITUATIONS

"I left the McGregor Bivy in the Tararua's and planned on following the Waiohine river down to the Mid Waiohine Hut. We had had a heavy snowfall on Tuesday and heavy rain on Wednesday but Thursday morning dawned fine so I trekked off down the ridge to the Waiohine river.

The river was running clear but about 2 feet higher than normal. Most crossings were chest deep and I had to swim through 3 gorges. By early afternoon my legs had turned blue from the cold and had started to seize up. By 3 pm I was only halfway to my destination and I was having trouble walking and as I knew I had another three gorges to swim I realised I was in big trouble and rain was forecast overnight.

My decision to activate my Fastfind PLB was a hard one but I realised I was not as young as I used to be and now was in a serious life threatening situation. It was the correct choice to activate and a relief I had the PLB with me. Within two and a half hours a rescue helicopter arrived piloted by someone I used to work with.

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John McCann.



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MARK WATSON

Approaching the summit of Tapuae-O-Uenuku

TAPUAE-O-UENUKU, 2885m

Tapuae O Uenuku Scenic Reserve, Canterbury



Tapuae-o-Uenuku, or Tappy, as it's more colloquially known, translates to Footsteps of the Rainbow God – a poetic title if ever there was one, but to set foot on it is to discover a mountain quite unlike any other peak in New Zealand.

Standing higher than any other mountain north of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park and separated from other South Island ranges by a considerable distance, Tappy is an outlier and standing on its summit the view stretches unimpeded for 360-degrees.

In summer, the top is attainable by those with basic ice axe and crampon skills and good route finding ability. Winter requires a greater degree of experience due to

avalanche risk.

The journey feels like an expedition with a windy and dusty drive following the Awatere River up the Molesworth Valley.

River crossings are mandatory and you soon lose count as you zigzag dozens of times back and forth across the Hodder River, deep in its incised canyon. The wet feet and the toil upstream are worth it though when you emerge on the pleasant terrace of the Hodder Huts with the summit now in reach.

An early start is advisable to catch any remaining snow while it's still firm and axe, crampons and helmet should be used. **Time** 2-3 days **Grade** Moderate

TE ATUAOPARAPARA, 1687m

Ruahine Forest Park, Manawatu / Wanganui



This is a significant summit on the main spine of the Ruahine Range, and a peak often viewed from the tops above the popular Sunrise Hut. From this eastern angle, it appears formidable, with steep, ragged scree slopes falling away from the summit crags.

However, the peak is easily traversed on its western slopes and makes a good destination for a weekend round-trip, with a night at Sunrise Hut. On a good day, the summit offers fine views eastward over Hawke's Bay and north and south along the crest of the Ruahine Range.

Time North Block Road to Te Atuaoparapara summit via Waipawa Saddle 3.5-5hr; summit to North Block Road via Sunrise Hut 4-5hr **Grade** Moderate

Trampers negotiate steep slopes
and the Tararua Peaks ladder

TARARUA PEAKS, 1325m

Tararua Forest Park,
Wellington



A thrilling peak in the Tararua Range, it is steep, jagged and requires a good head for heights. At one point a metal ladder is provided and, at another, a rope helps you around Tuiti. Anyone who enjoys climbing fun rocky terrain will enjoy it.

Time 2-3 days Grade Moderate

Walkers on the
ridge leading to
Mt Tongariro



MT TONGARIRO, 1967m

Tongariro National Park,
Manawatu-Wanganui



Tongariro is the easiest of the three major Central Plateau volcanoes and can be easily done as a diversion on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing – adding an hour or two to the total walking time.

My all-time favourite experience of the mountain was when I snowshoed my way to the summit one winter and then went off the beaten track on my return to the car park.

I fairly raced along the kilometres of boardwalk in the Mangatepopo Valley, only pausing to catch my breath on the Devil's Staircase – somewhat tamed after track upgrades – before reaching South Crater and shin-deep snow.

Out came the snow shoes for the plod along the crater and up to Red Crater where poles marked the Mt Tongariro Summit Route.

Other hikers in crampons were already on the route. A girl dropped her walking pole and we watched in silence as it skittered down the steep slope to South Crater. It was a disheartening retrieval for her, but she eventually caught back up with her friends.

The firm snow crunched beneath my snowshoes and though the broad ridge doesn't provide the thrill of exposure found on knife-edge ridges it's a magnificent place to be with the flat expanses of Central and North craters on one side, South Crater and the ever-impressive Ngauruhoe on the other. Everything, everywhere blanketed in pristine snow.

From the summit interesting new routes become available. I watched some people descend the northern slope to shortcut their way over Central Crater to rejoin the Tongariro Alpine Crossing on their way to Ketetahi. I was heading back to Mangatepopo car park, so dropped down the eastern side and took Hardmans Ridge (unnamed on topos) down the Mangatepopo Valley. On the way I spied several good campsites.

You're meant to come off the ridge at Mangatepopo Hut for the final stretch back to the car, but I mistakenly thought the ridge would be quicker. A brutal scrub bash and twice having to leap the Mangatepopo Stream left me utterly exhausted.

But what a day.

Time 6-8hr Grade Moderate

- Alistair Hall

MT TECHNICAL, 1870M

Lake Sumner Forest
Park, Canterbury



On a good day, the undulating terrain of the Lewis Tops must be just about a trumper's paradise. Reached on a short track through beech forest, these are some of the most easily accessible tops in the country. With dozens of tarns, there's no shortage of water and swimming holes on a hot summer's day.

While traversing these undulating tussocklands makes for an easy stroll, for the tramping peak-bagger, there's the added advantage of a significant challenge ahead: Mt Technical. At 1870m, the peak forms the highest summit in the immediate vicinity, a craggy monolith rising above the tussock apron on its lower flanks.

Several possible routes lead to the summit, all requiring a reasonable head for heights. The route I chose is the west ridge, which begins from a saddle near another peak called The Apprentice.

Travel on the west ridge is easy enough at first, with the occasional crag to sidle on either side, before the route rears up more steeply, and the scrambling proper begins.

The rock offers nothing harder than about grade 8-10, and is generally good by New Zealand standards with just a few loose sections to be careful on. As I was climbing solo, I made sure to keep three points of contact and found the exposure exhilarating.

Where the west ridge joins the north ridge, the gradient eases, but the route-finding is not over. There's more scrambling, and a couple of crevices to negotiate. A battered wooden trig beacon marks the summit, which has extensive views of the encircling mountains.

Happily, for I never like a steep descent, there's an easier route off the summit ridge, descending a scree gully. From there you can pick a reasonably direct line over rocky ledges on the Lucretia side of the ridge, and make your way back to the Lewis Tops over the saddle near The Apprentice.

While climbing Mt Technical in one day is possible, most parties will opt for a camp en route, or a stay at Brass Monkey Biv (two bunks). Through-trips to Lucretia Stream, or Duchess Stream, both of which lead down into the Nina Valley, offer interesting alternatives back to the Lewis Pass Highway.

Note: if you have any doubts about your ability to tackle the scrambling required for either the north or west ridges, it's probably best to ascend the scree route normally used on the descent.

Time 8-12hr Grade Difficult

- Shaun Barnett

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MT TITIROA, 1715m

Reader **Sarah Smith** explains why Mt Titiroa is a photographer's dream

Situated in eastern Fiordland, Mt Titiroa protrudes distinctly out of the Hunter Mountains. Although not the highest peak in the range, it glistens in the sun and attracts the attention of many travelling the road south to Te Anau and Lake Manapouri.

Its conspicuous glint often prompts the question, 'is that snow on the top?' In winter, the answer would most likely be yes. In summer, however, the reflective shine can be attributed to the white sands of the mountain itself.

Noted to be a photographer's nirvana, I only recently summited this peak, after having it on my radar for a number of years.

On top, the alpine scrub gives way to coarse white sand, dotted with infrequent plant life. Emerging from the desolate sand, monumental granite boulders, in all shapes and forms, scatter across the ridge. Standing, like sentinels, they survey the land.

Below, the cobalt waters of Lake Manapouri and its meandering shore,

shrouded in cloud and mist, paint a picture that is distinctly Fiordland; forever changing, damp and mysterious.

To wander around this rare and unique environment is a privilege, the granite boulders and rocky landscape resembling something from another planet. Hours can be spent meandering among the

rocks, imagining all sorts of objects and photographing the views.

An awe-inspiring, geological marvel, Mt Titiroa's desolation and starkness offer a contrast to the dense, wet rainforest typical of Fiordland. Despite this though, it still remains; Fiordland.

Time 18hr (two days) **Grade** Difficult



Celebrating the Fiordland views on Mt Titiroa

SARAH K SMITH WWW.SARAHKSMITHPHOTOGRAPHY.CO.NZ

THE PINNACLES, 759m

Coromandel Forest Park,
Waikato

The inland jewel of the Coromandel, The Pinnacles is a marvellous destination and accessible to all ages, especially with the 80-bunk Pinnacles Hut situated at its base. The walk to the hut is through forest, following an old packhorse route, and is of a mostly easy grade.

From the hut it's a 45min hike up countless steps along what, at one time, must have been a scary, exposed scramble to the lookout.

The Pinnacles look dramatic and the views of the surrounding steep-sided forested hills and the distant ocean and islands don't disappoint, either.

Time 6hr **Grade** Easy

MT TRAVERS, 2338m

Nelson Lakes National
Park, Tasman

The highest tramper-accessible peak in the park and a wonderful climb, either as part of the Travers-Sabine circuit or as a return trip from St Arnaud, staying at John Tait Hut for two nights and maybe treating yourself to a boat trip across Lake Rotoiti.

The most accessible route is from the Upper Travers Track, following Summit Creek up to loose scree and rock which is a steep, but manageable scramble to the summit ridge.

Time 3-4 days **Grade** Difficult

MT TYNDALL, 2496m

Mt Aspiring National Park,
Otago

The upper West Matukituki is surrounded by fine mountains and if you climb steeply up the scarp to Cascade Saddle, then a view unfolds where permanent ice and glaciers roll off a long and undulating ridge above the Dart Glacier.

Head south from here, up the slopes of Mt Tyndall. The climb finishes with an easy scramble and you're rewarded with wonderful views south and east across the Shotover and West Matukituki valleys.

To the west and north stand Mt Aspiring and the numerous proud peaks towering over the Dart Glacier.

Time Two days **Grade** Difficult

MT WAKEFIELD, 2058m

Fourteen-year-old reader **Ben Mitchell** remembers hot chocolate and bolting down scree slopes on Mt Wakefield



Mt Wakefield is not technically difficult, but it offers superb panoramic views from your first steps including many of Mt Cook National Park's giants. In fact, if you kept following the ridge past the summit you'd find yourself beyond Ball Pass and at the summit of Aoraki!

Wakefield has really easy access: park the car by the bridge that crosses the Hooker River and start climbing. After an hour you are past the alpine scrub and ready to pop out on the rocky ridge, puffing appreciation of your surroundings.

Further up, huge scree slopes drop from the left of the ridge (providing an exhilarating scree-run to the car on the return).

A few false summits later, leave the ridge and sidle off to a flattish section on the right. Another half-hour upwards and you slip back over the ridge and down into the

camping area with a few small tarns (1680m), swimmable in summer and skate-able in winter.

The summit lies an hour onwards, and the view is stunning. You can easily get up and down in a single day in summer, but I prefer

the camp-in-snow option. Treat yourself to a hot chocolate at sunset sitting on the high ledges overlooking the Hermitage, Mueller Lake, Mt Sefton and the lower Hooker Glacier.

Time 7-9hr **Grade** Moderate



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A photograph of two hikers with large backpacks walking on a rocky trail. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a blue jacket, tan pants, and a brown beanie. The hiker in the background is wearing a purple jacket and dark pants. They are both carrying large, grey and green backpacks. The background shows a steep, rocky mountain slope with some snow patches under a clear blue sky.

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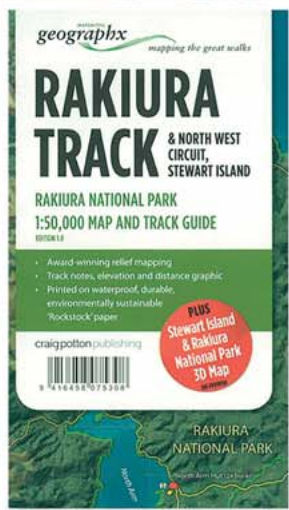
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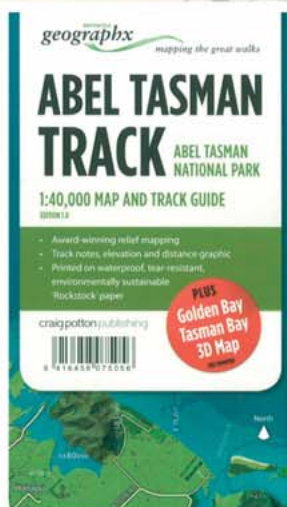
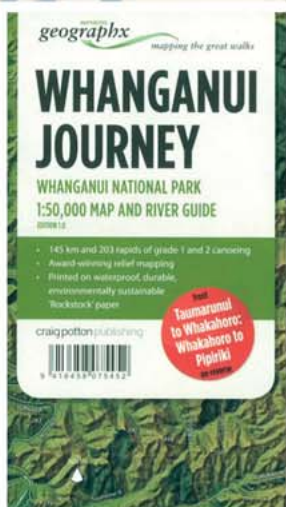
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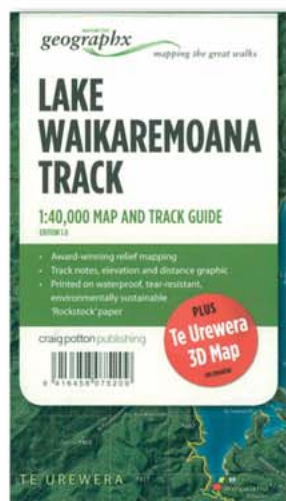
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COURGETTE PESTO FUSILLI



Don't you just love summer food! Through winter it seems to be all about slow roasting, reducing and simmering, but in summer all the best dishes seem to be a matter of finding some fantastic fresh ingredients (often just a matter of walking out to the veggie garden) and throwing them together into a tasty combo like this fusilli. This dish works great hot or cold; as a light meal on its own, or paired with freshly caught salmon (see the hot-rock salmon recipe, October 2013) for a more substantial meal.

PROFILE

Serves: Two
Weight: 1.1kg
Volume: 1l
Kilojoules: 8800
Cost: \$12
Time: 20min
Fuel: 130ml of white spirit or 50g of gas*
**Based on an MSR Whisperlite or Primus Classic operating at sea level.*

INGREDIENTS

1tbsp olive oil
4tbsp (or one small pottle) basil pesto
4 medium sized courgettes, sliced lengthways
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
1/4 cup grated parmesan
500g fusilli (AKA 'spirals' or 'twirly pasta')
Salt and pepper

METHOD

Bring a medium pot of water to the boil, add the pasta and cook until al dente. Drain and set aside.

Heat the oil in a frying pan, then add the courgette slices. Fry until golden brown, remove and set aside. Add the pine nuts and fry lightly – don't turn your back on them, they go from perfectly cooked to black in a matter of seconds!

Stir the pesto through the pasta, then add the fried courgette and pine nuts. Garnish with shaved parmesan and a little salt and pepper.

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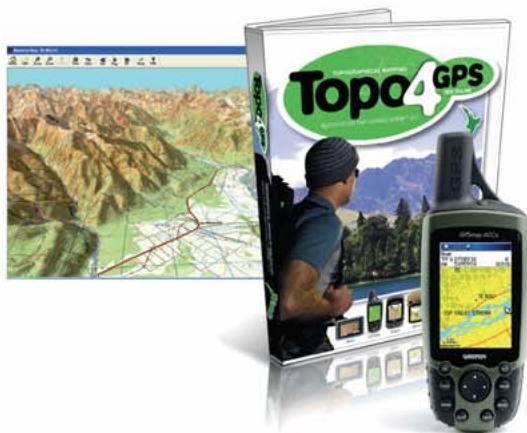
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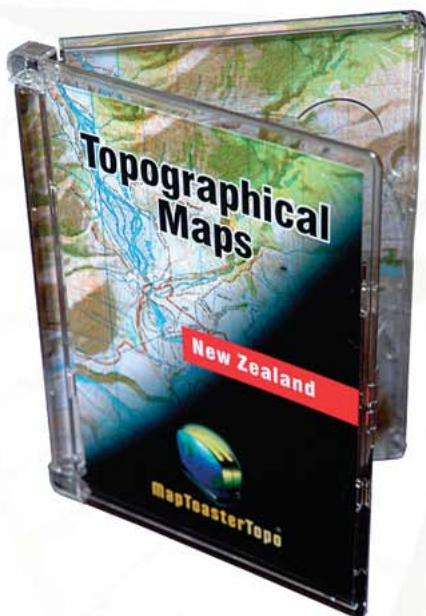


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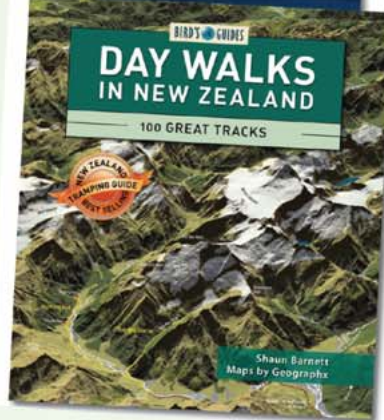
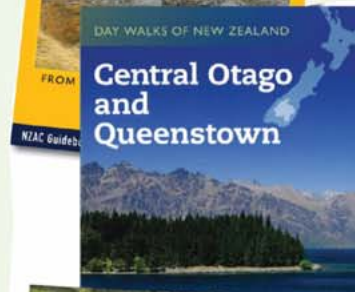
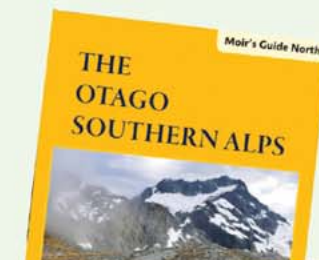
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SMALL BEGINNINGS

At a global forum on nature and parks, **Mick Abbott** learns that it's the small things that count

There's a patch of forest in my hometown where I know its manuka, kotukutuku and regenerating totara intimately. Each time there I see the change in the forest and bird-life. It's a place where nature and its influence on me is at its most special.

It's not spectacular in a scenic sort of way. There are no grand waterfalls or precipitous cliffs. Most of the old trees are forked or gnarled, though that's why they're still there – all the straight timber was milled 150 years ago.

While this 45ha of forest matters greatly to our family, I'm not sure it would rate a mention to many other people. It's not something passing motorists notice. Most of it is in that loose condition between scrub and bush, and of a state that I'm sure a number of our farming neighbours wonder why it's not cleared so it'll produce some income in the form of pasture or pine.

Perhaps they're right. It's only a small patch of land, and whatever we do with it makes little difference in the grand scheme of things. It's the vast tracts of forest found in the likes of Fiordland, Kahurangi and the Tararua that we need to vigilantly protect.

Or is it? Do those pockets of nature dotted around our more productive landscapes play just as important a role in protecting our biodiversity as the iconic public conservation lands?

Understanding how we can best care for the planet's biodiversity was a topic of debate at the recent International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Parks Forum held last November in Sydney. Heads of state, cabinet ministers, park managers and researchers from around the world were there, including our own Minister of Conservation Maggie Barry and DOC CEO Lou Sanson.

Some of the presentations resembled a

telethon of promises to set aside so many hectares of land by such and such a decade. However, the key message was the absolute urgency, given the rampant acceleration of species extinctions, habitat loss and climate change, to protect much more of the planet's land and marine areas.

The dominant idea of the forum was about no longer seeing our protected areas in isolation, but as something connective. Parks aren't so much stand-alone reserves but part of a network of native ecosystems that permeate a region. Pockets of biodiversity can be as important as a large reserve. A good example is how Zealandia is seeding kaka and other birdlife across Wellington.

Rather than being an escape from our daily lives, nature must become integral to every aspect. As Chris Ryan from the University of Melbourne said, no longer should we imagine parks in cities, or cities located in a wider park. Instead we need to create cities that are themselves parks. In this, ecology and recreation can be joined to support healthy lifestyles and well-being.

Visionary projects were also showcased – concepts for a single 130-million-hectare park that would span from Yellowstone to Yukon (y2y.net), and others that imagined connecting landscapes from Europe to Korea.

There were progress reports on the global targets set at Aichi, Japan, in which almost every country in the world has agreed to protect 17 per cent of the world's land areas for their biodiversity values. Others discussed renowned biologist E. O. Wilson's recently issued challenge demanding half the planet be set aside for nature.

Such goals are challenging, and deliberately so. But they can create a sense of personal helplessness; there seems little individually we can do to achieve this.

That's why I felt the address by Achim Steiner, head of the United Nations Environment Programme, mattered most. Steiner

challenged governments and individuals on the deep issues and opportunities this planet and its precious natural environment faces.

He spoke of the planet as a sacred place that sustains life, biodiversity, spiritual values and human prosperity. He argued that almost all studies show parks produce substantial economic benefits. Certainly in the New Zealand context how would this country's tourism and primary produce fare without the ecosystem services and marketing appeal of our natural environment?


Protected areas also lock up over 300 gigatonnes of carbon that forestry would inevitably release. They also provide vital habitat for species that are becoming less resilient to changes in the environment.

Hence the work of protected area managers must be understood as something more than just the delivery of governmental directives. A core function, for instance of bodies like DOC, is to deliver on what Steiner called the 'social contract' placed on them to best care for the ecological and human values protected areas sustain.

It is this moral imperative to act in nature's best interest that lies at the heart of all conservation efforts in the 21st century.

This is why Steiner considers people are essential to protected areas, just as such places are essential to people. It's by our actions to protect biodiversity, and the ways we let nature shape us and what we do, that possible futures can be found.

In New Zealand many people are active in restoration. The pocket of bush by my home is one of literally thousands of projects being run by volunteers across the country. And while it will never become a national park, we know these patches of forest, coast and ocean – no matter how small or scrubby – are a vital part of a global network of ecological biodiversity that, taken together, matter utterly.

Protected natural areas that will always be the foundation for life on this planet. 





ROCKY LADDER

A fun, exposed scramble awaits those who make the climb along Talbot Ladder Ridge while climbing Mt McPherson, 1931m, high above the Milford Highway.

The route is exciting and not particularly difficult, though it is often totally wet and there is a small glacier to negotiate before reaching McPherson's lofty summit. Extensive views are the reward for the struggle.
- Jakub Cejpek

Camera settings: Canon 5D MkII, ISO 200, 1/200 at f8



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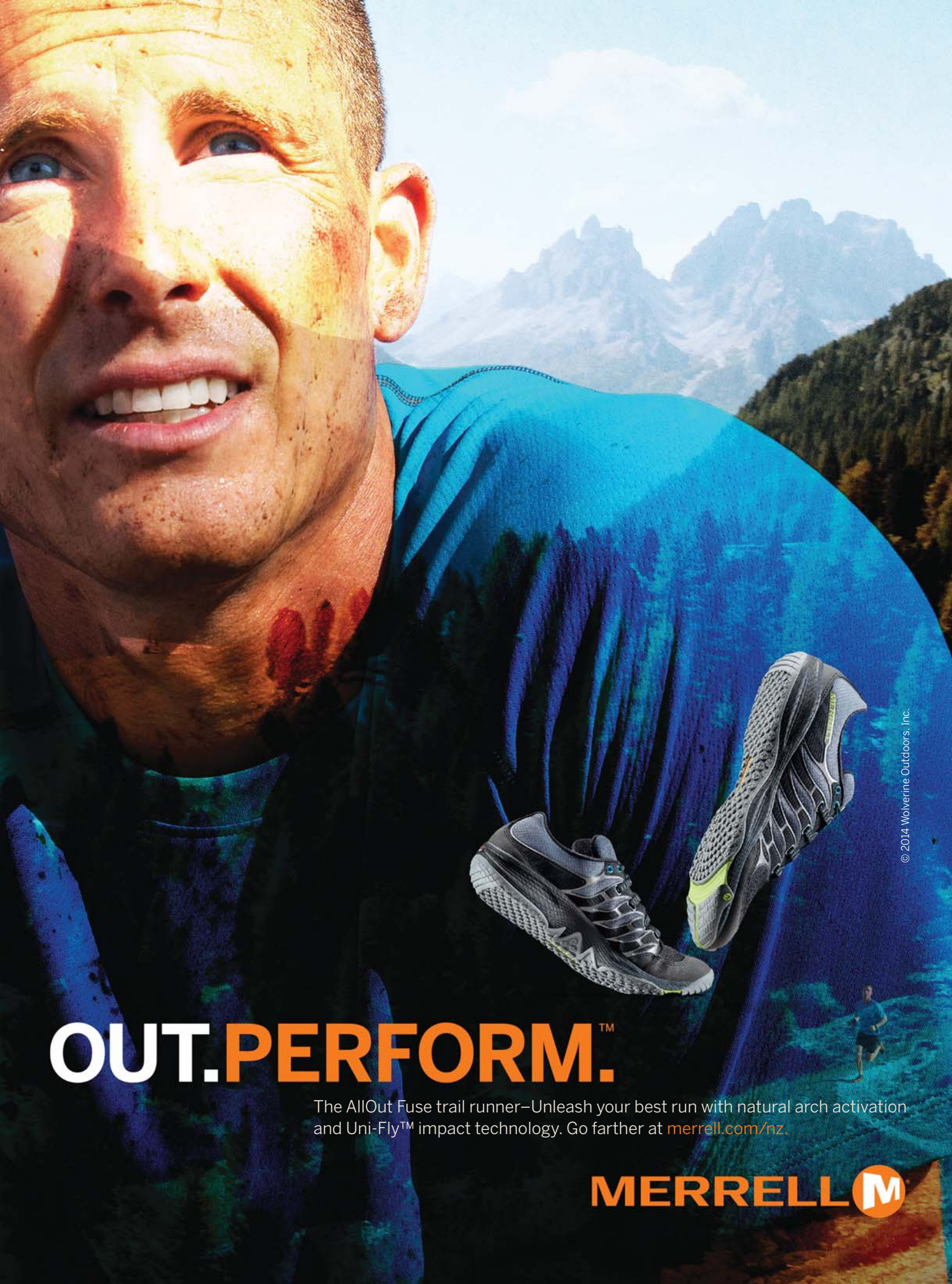
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